THE BENEFITS OF BILINGUALISM

Laurie Kraaijeveld
School Supported Languages Coordinator
Multilinguals outnumber monolinguals.
“The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.”

Wittgenstein
FROM BABEL TO GLOBAL
ENDANGERED LANGUAGES

Language Hotspots

These areas have a high number of languages in danger of extinction.

THREAT LEVEL
- SEVERE
- HIGH
- MEDIUM
- LOW

Click on a highlighted area to learn more.
SHAN PROGRAMME IN THAILAND
“TREES GROW THROUGH THEIR ROOTS; HUMAN BEINGS GROW THROUGH THEIR MOTHER TONGUE.” (MEDYA ORMEEK (9 YEAR-OLD TEACHER OF KURDISH)
Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS): 1-2 years

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS): 5-7 years to reach the level of a native speaker

Emerging bilinguals → moving target

Mother tongue maintenance supports the development of English skills
Benefits of Maintaining the Mother Tongue (Thomas & Collier, 2002)

- Speakers of other languages in international schools learn English more quickly and effectively if they maintain and develop their proficiency in the mother tongue (reading, writing, listening, speaking)

- Concepts, language, and literacy skills transfer from the Mother Tongue (MT) to the Language of Instruction (LOI)
BENEFITS

- Cognitive: deeper understanding of language, wider vocabulary, more flexibility in thinking
- Cultural: retain a positive attitude toward their mother tongue and cultural background
- Social and personal development
- Health
- Job prospects
- Global service
HOW BILINGUALISM WORKS

One wheel (one language) can get you places...

So can a big wheel and a little wheel...

However, when your wheels are nicely balanced and fully inflated you’ll go farther...

Provided, of course, the people who made the wheels knew what they were doing.
SUBTRACTIVE BILINGUALISM

- Rejection of MT
- Development of MT stagnates
- Personal and conceptual foundation for learning = undermined.

- What is gained in return? Is it worth it?

ADDITIVE BILINGUALISM

One well developed mother tongue

Interrupted development of the mother tongue

Well developed bilingualism


SCHOOL SUPPORTED OPTION IN G11

- 7 students studying 7 languages: Dutch, German, Norwegian, Italian, Siswati, Shona, Zulu

- Timetabled sessions with the Coordinator

- Literature tutorials in person or on skype

- 10 works (drama, prose, poetry), including 2 in translation

- IB Bilingual Diploma
MY EMAIL ADDRESS

lkr@uwcsea.edu.sg