



Winter 2017

# Soleado

Promising Practices from the Field

## Making Metalinguistic Connections: The Bridge between Languages

by Karen Beeman and Cheryl Urow—Center for Teaching for Biliteracy

The Bridge is an instructional element designed to take advantage of the dynamic bilingualism of students in dual language (one-way and two-way) and transitional bilingual programs of instruction. In our book, *Teaching for Biliteracy: Strengthening Bridges between Languages* (Beeman & Urow, 2013), we define the Bridge as “... the instructional moment when teachers purposefully bring the two languages together, strategically guiding bilingual learners to

- transfer the academic content they have learned in one language to the other,
- engage in contrastive analysis of the two languages, ... and
- develop ‘metalinguistic awareness’” (back cover).

Based on this definition and the longer description and examples in the text, we have worked with teachers around the country who have begun to use the Bridge in their classrooms. While there is no one right way to implement the

Bridge, and its implementation will reflect both the students and the structure of each bilingual program in which it is used, there are some basic elements of the Bridge to keep in mind that ensure the successful use of this instructional tool.

*The focus of the Bridge is language—specifically, the metalinguistic analysis of language.*

Research in the field of biliteracy finds that bilinguals who recognize, understand, and can articulate the similarities and differences between their languages reach higher levels of academic achievement and higher levels of language development in both languages



Students add examples to a metalinguistic chart in Kaite Mohr's 1st grade classroom—the English component of a 50/50 dual language program—at Glacier Edge School, Verona, WI.

(Cummins et al., 2005; DeJong, 2011; Dressler, Carlo, Snow, August, & White, 2011; Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). And while the research demonstrates the need for students to have the opportunity to engage in contrastive analysis of their languages (in other words, to compare and contrast languages), the question for teachers is how to provide students with this opportunity while simultaneously maintaining the separation of languages—a critical programmatic element of dual language (Rogers, 2009).

The Bridge is a response to that question. In the past, dual language teachers and programs have worked to establish the **strict separation of languages**, while currently, the field has moved to the **strategic separation of languages** (Escamilla et al., 2014; Thomas & Collier, 2012). In programs that include the Bridge, classroom teachers continue to maintain the language of instruction

—continued on page 14—

### Inside this issue ...

- ▣ Preparing Dual Language Teachers: A Call for National Standards
- ▣ Reflecting on the AIM4S<sup>3</sup>™ Mathematics Framework ... the Learning Policy Institute
- ▣ El desarrollo de identidades académicas en el contexto de un programa de lenguaje dual
- ▣ Strengthening Biliteracy Development in OCDE Project GLAD®
- ▣ Teacher Preparation—Re-engineering the Pipeline, Part 2
- ▣ Building Instructional Capacity—Next Steps with the CLAVES™ Framework



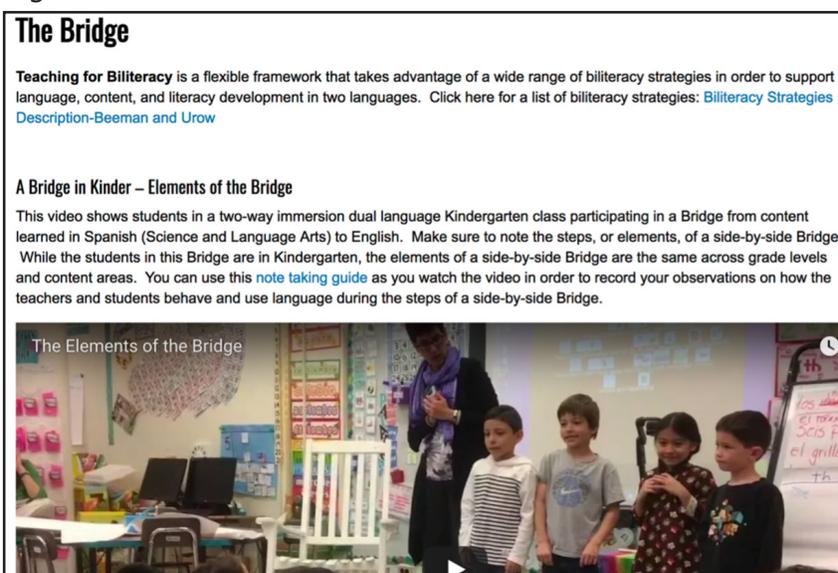
—continued from page 1—

during content and literacy instruction and to **avoid** language flip-flopping, simultaneous translation, and using the other language to “make sure students understand the concept.” For example, in a dual language program where math is taught in Spanish, math continues to be taught in Spanish throughout the school year. During math instruction, the teacher begins instruction of a new math concept by explicitly building the Spanish academic language of math so that all students can comprehend and actively participate in their learning. Math instruction continues in Spanish, supported by math materials which are also in Spanish. After multiple lessons—in which the teacher continues to teach in Spanish and the students use Spanish in their work—the unit on the math concept is completed, and a classroom assessment (also in Spanish) is given to the students. It is only after the classroom assessment on this concept is completed that the Bridge is introduced.

### *Students are active participants in the Bridge.*

In a side-by-side Bridge, the teacher first asks the students for key terms related to the concepts learned. Depending on several factors including the concepts studied, the level of bilingualism of the students, and the grade level of the students, these terms may be individual words, phrases, or complete sentences. The students provide these terms to the teacher in the language of instruction—because that is what they know after studying the concepts in that language. To see kindergarten students actively participating in the Bridge by providing key terms they learned in Spanish after a multi-week unit on insects in science, go to <http://www.teachingforbilitery.com/the-bridge/> (see Figure 1). For additional information on what is meant by active student engagement, see <https://www.facebook.com/teachingforbilitery/videos/1468035366590726/>.

Figure 1



### *The Bridge is designed to optimize transfer and reduce redundancy.*

Once a list of learned terms has been provided, the teacher then helps students to “cross the Bridge” by providing the key terms in the other language. In the math example in this article and in the science example in the Kindergarten video, the Bridge goes from content learned in Spanish to English. So, in these examples, in order to help students cross the Bridge, the teacher provides the terms in English. But it is important to note that the Bridge is bidirectional. The Bridge also goes from content learned in English to Spanish, following the same steps. Each district’s language and content allocation plan and bilitery maps determine the direction of the Bridge (for

examples of plans that include Bridges, go to <http://www.teachingforbilitery.com/infrastructure-supports/>, and for tips on how to create bilitery maps, go to <http://www.teachingforbilitery.com/tips-on-writing-bufs/>).

After providing the terms in the other language, the teacher gives students the time to practice using

these terms. In the math example, after crossing the Bridge, the students would be practicing math terms in English. In the video, you can see the Kindergarten students practice describing insects in English, after having studied insects in Spanish for several weeks and subsequently “going across the Bridge” to English with the teacher’s support. These students do not need to study insects again in English to be able to articulate their understanding of insects in English, thus reducing redundancy in instruction.

### *The Bridge is pre-planned by the teacher.*

As in the both the math example and the science example, the Bridge was planned ahead of time by the teacher. The Bridge did not occur randomly, or in order to clarify concepts for students, or to translate information for students. Rather, the Bridge was planned for the end of the unit, once the students had

—continued on page 15—

—continued from page 14—

Figure 2

Multiplicación	Multiplication
matriz	array
suma repetida	repeated addition
grupos iguales	equal groups
estrategias	strategies
por	times
factores	factors
producto	product
propiedades	properties
multiplicar	to multiply
ecuación	equation
signo de multiplicación	multiplication sign
tabla de multiplicación	multiplication table
grupos de dígito	groups of digit

Figure 3

Orden	Order
Sustantivo - Adj.	Adj - Noun
grupo igual	equal groups
carro rojo	red car
bufanda mágica	magic scarf
Reloj negro	Blk clock
suma repetida	Repeated addition

Thanks to Jackie Juliano, third-grade teacher in Mannheim D83, Illinois, for these anchor charts.

### Conclusion

A well-implemented Bridge is pre-planned by the teacher, is designed to support the transfer of learned concepts from the language of instruction to the other language, focuses on the metalinguistic analysis of language, and involves the students as active participants. The Bridge is an instructional element for organizing the strategic separation of

languages. The two examples provided in this article are examples of side-by-side Bridges, but there are other ways to Bridge as well. *Teaching for Bilinguality* offers examples of two additional types of Bridges, a graph or illustration (pp. 138–139) and an *Así se dice* Bridge (pp. 139–140).

learned the concepts and were ready to focus on the contrastive analysis of their languages.

After having time to practice the terms in the new language, these terms are matched to the terms in the language of instruction. At this point, the math Bridge would look like the Bridge in Figure 2, and the focus of the Bridge becomes metalinguistic. Because the purpose of the Bridge is two-fold—both to help students transfer content learned in one language to the other language and to engage in contrastive analysis of their languages—a side-by-side Bridge will produce two anchor charts. The first chart is the Bridge itself (Figure 2) and focuses on transfer. The second chart is the metalinguistic chart (Figure 3) and focuses on one area of similarity or difference between the two languages.

In the math example illustrated above, the metalinguistic focus chosen by the teacher is word order, or syntax. In the metalinguistic chart, the teacher has begun by taking terms from the Bridge chart and highlighting, in this case, the difference between noun-adjective word order in Spanish and in English. After beginning with examples from the Bridge, the metalinguistic chart becomes a living chart with a permanent place in the classroom, inviting students to add additional examples of this difference between Spanish and English. To see more about how the metalinguistic chart is used in the classroom as a living chart, see <https://www.facebook.com/teachingforbilinguality/videos/1468087206585542/>.

### References

- Beeman, K., & Urow, C. (2013). *Teaching for biliteracy: Strengthening bridges between languages*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.
- Cummins, J., Bismilla, V., Chow, P., Cohens, S., Giampapa, F., Lioni, L., ... Sastra, P. (2005). Affirming identity in multilingual classrooms. *Educational Leadership*, 63 (1), 38-43.
- De Jong, E. J. (2011). *Foundations for multilingualism in education: From principles to practice*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.
- Dressler, C., Carlo, M. S., Snow, C. E., August, D., & White, C. E. (2011). Spanish-speaking students' use of cognate knowledge to infer meaning of English words. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition*, 14(2), 243-255.
- Escamilla, K., Hopewell, S., Butvilofsky, S., Sparrow, W., Soltero-González, L., Ruiz-Figueroa, O., Escamilla, M. (2014). *Biliteracy from the start: Literacy squared in action*. Philadelphia: Caslon Publishing.
- Jiménez, R. T., García, G. E., & Pearson, P. H. (1996). The reading strategies of bilingual Latino/a students who are successful English readers: Opportunities and obstacles. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 31(1), 90-112.
- Rogers, D. (2009). Meeting the challenge—Maintaining an effective dual language program. *Soleado: Promising Practices from the Field*, 1(4), 1, 10. <http://www.soleado.dlenm.org>
- Thomas, W. P. & Collier, V. P. (2012). *Dual Language Education for a Transformed World*. Albuquerque, NM: DLeNM/ Fuente Press.

