

Haida Gwaii

AGENDA ADDITIONS of the **REGULAR MEETING** of the Board of Education
School District No. 50 (Haida Gwaii)

4. DELEGATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

4.1 Parents of French Immersion Students at Sk'aadgaa Naay Elementary

Cont.

From: WordPress premier@qcislands.net
Subject: [School District 50]
Date: June 27, 2016 at 1:31 PM
To: ssansome@sd50.bc.ca



Name : Lenore Lawrence

Email : premier@qcislands.net

Comment : I have just paid my property taxes some of these taxes are designated for education. I would assume these taxes collected are used to run the school board office and to pay trustees. I would like to,think the trustees have some responsibility to treat the taxpayers with respect. To feel afraid to contact your school trustee because of politics is ridiculous.

I cannot understand how cutting a robust french immersion program is benefiting anybody. At the Haida graduation elders gave wonderful speeches encouraging the students to prepare themselves for as many opportunities as possible. Would not cutting out a language program just serve to isolate.? As wonderful as Haida is once students leave Haida Gwaii it will not be a language they will likely be able to speak in other parts of the world. I feel like the trustees are toying with my granddaughter's future. to play politics I do not think anybody was complaining about a split class. Let us have some common sense.

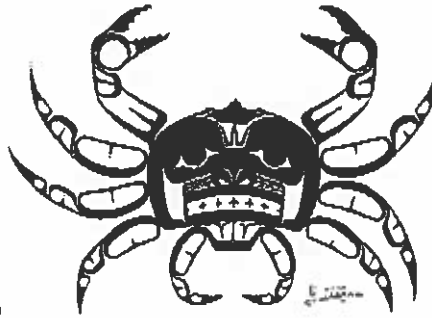
Just to be clear I am all in favour of a Haida language program immersion or otherwise.

Lenore Lawrence.

Hopefully this goes to the trustees and someone in in the dept of education.

Thank you for,your consideration.

**HIGaagilda
Xaayda Kil Naay**



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PO Box 1235
Skidegate, B.C. V0T 1S1
tel: (250) 559-9073
fax: (250) 559-7880
Email: ship@haidagwaii.net

S.H.I.P.
(Skidegate Haida Immersion Program)
<http://www.skidegate.ca/ship.html>

June 24, 2016

Haida Gwaii School District #50

To whom it may concern,

The Skidegate Haida Immersion Program fully supports the decision made by the board members of SD #50 (Policy #3400) pertaining to French Immersion classes at Sk'aadGa Naay.

The only language we can support is the Skidegate Haida Language.

Haawa.

SHIP Elders & Staff

Kevin Bourgeois
Konrad B. Boney
Linda Dallas
Isabel Briceon Ijuw X. iiloay
Betty Fisherhson Ialgyaa'adad
Pat Gellerman
Laura Jormanainers
Joel Richardson

AMY Young
Yaahldagji (B.P. Run)
Hazel Williams Sr,
Grace Jones
Bernice Lewis
Beatrice Hor
(Deane Brown)
Gwaaganod
Harvey Williams
HTR



Draft Policy Revisions Response Form

Name of Policy: 3400 French Immersion

1. Are the draft policy revisions easily understood? If not, what suggestions would you make to improve its clarity?

No, the policy revisions are not revisions, they are a reversal of an existing policy. Changes are not clear, nor are explanations given.

2. Do you have concerns with the draft policy revisions? What suggestions for change would you make?

Absolutely. I think many concerned stakeholders have clearly presented the numerous issues with the draft policy revisions. I fully agree with Cathy Rigg's proposed changes.

3. Do you have any other comments regarding the draft policy revisions?

Yes. I think many other parents have outlined the facts, discussed the financial impacts, the community impacts, the lack of communication and transparency, and the many other legitimate problems with the Board's proposed changes, so I will not restate those comments here.

I will, however, attempt to speak to the heart of the issue. In making these proposed changes, the Board has failed to live up to those standards set by the Haida Nation for ALL peoples living on Haida Gwaii to live by.

Yahquudang - Respect

Respect for self, each other, all living things. The Board's decision to cut French Immersion with no public consultation shows a total lack of respect for many concerned community members and, sadly, this feeling is now reciprocal.

'Laa quu ga kanhlins - Responsibility

Acceptance of the responsibility passed on by Haida ancestors to manage and care for everything on Haida Gwaii, and to ensure that Haida heritage is passed on to future generations. The Board has shown clear lack of understanding of the responsibility bestowed upon them by their constituents and all the people of Haida Gwaii. The decision to cut French Immersion, when there is nothing suitable to replace it, is harming the WHOLE of Haida Gwaii. Without this program, Haida Gwaii will lose valuable community members, volunteers, children, and funding. In an ever-shrinking world of technology, encouraging communication and cultural understanding is key to ensuring the continuation of strong and proud Haida culture.

Gina 'waadluxan gud ad kwaagiida - Interconnectedness

Everything depends on everything else. The Board's decision impacts the ENTIRETY of Haida Gwaii; We are ALL connected in many different ways. A negative situation will rock the Islands in ways none of us can truly



Draft Policy Revisions Response Form

understand.

Giid tli'juus - Balance

Balance is needed in our interactions to practice good judgment and wise decision making. There has been no balance in the judgment or decision making regarding the French Immersion cancellation. Certain aspects seem to be weighted more than others, creating an obvious imbalance in the decision making process.

Gina k'aadang.nga qii uu ti' k'anguudang - Seeking Wise Counsel

The roots of all people on these islands are intertwined. Listen to the elders about how to work in harmony. Ask for help when needed, and be open to the ideas of others and the knowledge they have to share. How can harmony be maintained when there is so much anger involved in the decision making process? 'Annoying' stake holders are upset because of the lack of transparency, the lack of openness, and the lack of receptiveness to new ideas.

Isda ad diigii isda - Reciprocity - Giving and Receiving

Reciprocity is essential in our interactions with each other. Both giving and receiving are important actions. There has been no reciprocity regarding the decision making process involved with the decision to cancel the successful French Immersion program. Concerned stakeholders (parents and community members) have given their explanations, given the facts, and given their hearts to the Board and had nothing in return.

I respectfully request that the Board moves to accept the proposed policy changes outlined by Cathy Rigg. I also request that the Board outline the issues underlying this decision so that meaningful dialogue can take place and future conflicts can be avoided.

I would also like to suggest that the Board approach this amazing and strong group of parents for help. I would like to see a future where we can all work together to solve problems and spend our time working WITH each other, not against.

Name: Jo Brunsdon

Position: SNES PAC Chair, Extremely concerned parent Location: Haida Gwaii

From: **Nancy Oike** nancyoike@gmail.com

Subject: **French Immersion Program in Haida Gwaii**

Date: **June 23, 2016 at 3:29 PM**

To: dhusband@sd50.bc.ca, econdrotte@sd50.bc.ca, hwilliams@sd50.bc.ca, kgoetzinger@sd50.bc.ca, wbrown@sd50.bc.ca, ssansome@sd50.bc.ca

NO

Dear Haida Gwaii School Board Members:

As a grandmother who has had four of my five grandchildren enrolled in French Immersion, at Sk'aadga Naay, I'd like to weigh in on the discussion over the pending elimination of the French Immersion program.

As we all recognize, Haida Gwaii children have many advantages in living in one of the most beautiful places on Earth, where they experience close community, cultural diversity, a rich and fertile natural environment, and the ability to play outdoors freely and safely.

However, through living in a small, isolated community, these same children also lack some advantages that other Canadian children have. For example, they don't have access to a pool or ice skating rink; their opportunities to learn and play many sports are restricted; and, despite heroic efforts of members of the community, there are fewer choices for children who want to participate in other life-enriching, confidence-building experiences such as music, dance, and other special interests.

It seems to me, therefore, that it is doing a great disservice to the families of Haida Gwaii to reduce one of the outstanding learning opportunities their children have now - the choice to learn Canada's second official language with all the accompanying benefits that accrue.

Although I understand that my own family won't be affected by the elimination of the French Immersion program, I ask you to reconsider your decision for the sake of others. These children deserve every possible opportunity to develop the skills that will enable them to thrive both in Haida Gwaii and in the global community. It just makes good sense to build rather than reduce their opportunities.

Respectfully,

Nancy Oike



Draft Policy Revisions Response Form

Name of Policy: 3400 French Immersion

1. Are the draft policy revisions easily understood? If not, what suggestions would you make to improve its clarity?

"Students in French Immersion will receive Haida instruction on an equitable basis as other classes."

- I thought my Chinai said that the elders in the school are working with teachers, at the teachers request. If some teachers ask for more support in integrating Haida into the curriculum than others then how will it be possible to make sure that time is equitable across the school. Will the elder be asked to work equal time with all teachers regardless of what the teachers vision for the class is? At certain times some teachers require lots of support, and others require less. This tends to shift and change. Interpreting the term "equitable" is challenging.

2. Do you have concerns with the draft policy revisions? What suggestions for change would you make?

"No new students from within the district will be added to the program and no new cohorts will be created."

Change: New students from within the district will be added to the program and new cohorts will be created."

1. In today's world, ideas around fear of the "other" has fuelled colonization, terrorist activities, and acts of extremism. Limiting our children to primarily learn about and be immersed in only one culture creates a sense of "other" with regards to other people in the world. The French Immersion program gives the children at SkaadGannay (if they so choose) a chance to understand another language and thereby become inter-connected to people of different cultural backgrounds in different parts of the world. It is a gift to give our children this opportunity.
2. There is a relatively large French community on Haida Gwaii (Pineaut's, Lavoie's, Fournier's, and Levesque's, to name a few). This program gives these children a chance to feel proud about their French heritage. In the spirit of inclusivity, I feel that this program is very important for building many of our children's identities and self-esteem.
3. The curriculum offered in the school should reflect the needs of the students, regardless of what the official languages are. In many other



Draft Policy Revisions Response Form

districts, language classes are offered in Spanish, Mandarin, Japanese and so forth, because there is a large demographic that would like these language opportunities for their children. Here we have a very large group of parents who would like an immersion program for their children. Right now, French is the only immersion program available. Taking it away hurts the needs of our children and values set out by the parents.

3. Do you have any other comments regarding the draft policy revisions?

No.

Name: Jay Jones

Position: Parent Location: Skidegate

From: Peter Lake plake@haidagwaii.net

Subject: Final submission (or addendum to submission) for the 28-June meeting.

Date: June 24, 2016 at 11:29 AM

To: ssansome ssansome@sd50.bc.ca, trustees@sd50.bc.ca

Cc: Shani Sparrow ShanilynneGoetzinger@hotmail.com, tiffanyannelavoie@gmail.com, crigg@haidagwaii.net, mmtfavreau@hotmail.com, unsuperhom@gmail.com, sewnart@haidagwaii.net, careneq@yahoo.ca, darrell.oike@gmail.com, gord63@haidagwaii.net, kirstenoike@gmail.com, lynn_chi_lee@sfu.ca, erniegladstone@hotmail.com, tlellsal@hotmail.com, lee-al.nelson@keywestins.com, mload@haidagwaii.net, mbenoit@qcislands.net, rfraser@sd50.bc.ca, sheewest@gmail.com, cmar@hgqci.org, andrea@haidagwaii.net, catherine.birtwistle@northernhealth.ca, kimberc@iname.com, deago534@yahoo.com, lorelei.krueger@yahoo.com, jbrunsden@gmail.com, andreaturton88@gmail.com, carlaannelutner@gmail.com, jenn@haidagwaii.net, snes.pac@gmail.com

Please accept this submission to the Board for the package to be distributed for meeting to be held on 28, June, 2016.

(I have been told that a package has been distributed already. I have not seen it, however and we have been told that submissions are accepted today.)

To the Board of Trustees, School District 50, Haida Gwaii.

Firstly: On the 22nd of June, I spoke with the indigenous Gitksan Language instructor, Mrs. Gwen Simms, at Majagaleehi Gali Aks Elementary School in Hazelton. (formerly John Field Elementary)

As you know, their community and nation has faced similar attack on their language, culture, children, and families from the settler culture.

I briefly told her of our problem and asked her for her experience of teaching an Indigenous language to kids.

She says that she notices a huge difference in uptake of Gitksan in the French Immersion kids. She is careful not to take anything away from the kids in the English stream but says that they seem to 'get' the language quicker (which the research and China Herb's experience suggests) but ALSO that the kids in the French Immersion stream are not as inhibited (even the shy ones) about trying the Gitksan language as well.

They have strong support from the Gitksan Elders for their programme and French Immersion it's proving a huge benefit to saving their language.

Ms. Simms encouraged me to urge our Haida Elders to vocally support the French Immersion with Haida programme for the good of the Haida Language.

Secondly: After a meeting and discussion with a large group of Elders at the S.H.I.P. on Thursday the 23rd I had some startling observations.

Some at the meeting had been told several falsehoods:

1. That French Immersion COSTS money rather than generating a net financial benefit.
2. That there is, already, a Haida Immersion programme at Sk'aadga Naay. (a young attendee even repeated this claim)
3. That French Immersion does not aid in the acquisition of the Haida Language.

That there is a trust issue from some of the elders and several of the non-regular S.H.I.P. around our request that French Immersion be continued until and only until there is a Haida Language Immersion programme to replace it. Given the broken promises by the Canadian government over the last century this is not surprising.

To help address this trust issue, I propose, again, that Catherine Rigg's draught ALTERNATIVE revision be reviewed, adjusted if necessary, and adopted to guarantee that Haida Immersion be adopted in place of French Immersion when staff and curriculum becomes available.

Several elders approached members of the parent's team attending the meeting stating that they agree with this plan but were feeling disempowered to communicate this.

I hope, for the sake of the Haida Language, Reconciliation, AND for the betterment of all our childrens' education that the board will give the alternative amendment (attached) due consideration.

Yours Truly,
Peter Lake, MD

For reference, the relevant parts of the proposed policy amendment are:

- "Students in French Immersion will receive Haida instruction on an equitable basis as other classes.

- Bi-lingual (Haida, French) and tri-lingual (Haida, French, English) projects and initiatives in the French Immersion classroom are to be incorporated into the French Immersion curriculum, and French Immersion staff are expected to work in close partnership with Haida language teachers.
- Progress by French Immersion students in Haida language acquisition will be monitored and documented to evaluate the potential benefits of language immersion programs on Haida language retention and communication.
- Classes will be closed down if the number enrolled is below 12 by Sept 30. Should the enrollment become insufficient, (below 12) the school district should consult parents to find solutions. If there is no resolution then the district shall give the remainder of the year as notice of any changes to parents of any changes to permit full discussion and allow parents time to consider alternatives.
- If/when a full Haida Immersion program is available to the students in a district school offering a French Immersion program, the ability of the district school to offer both programs will be evaluated. If there are competing fiscal resources, Haida Immersion will be given preference over French Immersion.”

**Agnes L. Mathers Pac
Sandspit**

I am writing this letter in support of keeping the French immersion program. This program is so beneficial to all the students in so many ways. Our students will be getting a chance at that as well as the Haida language and most are looking forward to having something new and exciting. I was fortunate to have French immersion but only for a short time when I was a child as I left here and was able to pursue it.

Now we are so fortunate to offer this to our students and have the opportunity to be a trilingual school! I hope that the board listens to all of the information and realizes that this is something that we can be recognized for not only our students but our island and school district.

Sincerely,

Sandra Larose

ALM PAC president

From: **Ruth Gladstone-Davies** sdfaw@skidegate.ca
Subject: **FW: French Immersion**
Date: **June 24, 2016 at 11:29 AM**
To: **ssansome@sd50.bc.ca**
Cc: **ruthgd@haidagwaii.net**



Sorry, this should have gone to SD 50 as well, Haaw'a

From: Ruth Gladstone-Davies [mailto:sdfaw@skidegate.ca]
Sent: June-24-16 10:05 AM
To: Ernie Gladstone (erniegladstone@hotmail.com)
Cc: 'Carla And Rick'; 'Andrea Wilhelm'; 'careneq@yahoo.ca'; 'mimipaquette@northsave.com'; 'Laurie.Husband@northernhealth.ca'; 'fraserearl@gmail.com'; 'Tracy Morton'; 'danalouisemoraes@gmail.com'; 'Sherisseyaroshuk@gmail.com'; 'jenpell33@gmail.com'; 'Janet Rigg'; 'Kiki van der Heiden'; 'bargains2@live.ca'; 'mailto:sdfaw@skidegate.ca'; 'Cathy Rigg'; 'Domestic Diva'; 'Ceitlynn & Russ'; 'Jo Brunsden'; 'Jennifer Byrne-Wissink'; 'jreidb@gmail.com'; 'Colleen Bradley'; 'Skaadgaa Naay PAC'; 'Severn Cullis-Suzuki'; 'Ben Davidson'; 'Tawni Davidson'; 'Kerilee Ann Duke'; 'Andrea Wilhelm'; 'Gordon Horner'; 'fraserearl@gmail.com'; 'jreidb@gmail.com'; 'Elizabeth Condrotte'; 'plake@haidagwaii.net'; 'cmar@hgqci.org'; Bonnie Walker
Subject: French Immersion

Hi Everyone,

Although I was not at SHIP yesterday I wanted to 'publicly' thank you Ernie for your advocacy for the French Immersion Program. My mom Audrey was there, she was so very proud of you and happy to hear that you recognize just how important both the Haida and French immersion programs are to our children. I am a grandmother, Dylan and Marin's "Nani" and they both absolutely love languages. They know a fair amount of Spanish from their times in Mexico, some Haida and very little of our second national language...French. I see in all these children, a paramount opportunity for all of us; the ability to reach the greatest number of people in the world when teaching who we are, and they can only do this by learning other languages. I celebrate their interest and their opportunity to learn as much as they can at the age they are most impressionable. I certainly support their fundamental right to learn Canada's second language. I would like you and all the parents who want this valuable program to continue, to know that that I support you all.

Kind regards, Ruthie

Ruth Gladstone-Davies
Skidegate Social Development
Phone: 250.559.2316 or 250.559.4496 ext. 35
Fax: (250) 559-8247

"We can't solve problems by using the same kind of thinking we used when we created them"
ALBERT EINSTEIN

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Queen Charlotte, Friday, June 3, 2016

RECEIVED JUN 24 2016

Dear Trustees,

I am writing in response to the Board of Trustees' recent decision to cancel the new intake for the French Immersion program at Sk'aadga Naay Elementary School. I would like to add my voice and perspective to those of other affected parents.

I grew up in the Netherlands speaking Dutch, surrounded by countries speaking German, Flemish, French, Danish and English. Surrounded by so many different languages, and depending on language skills to interact for economic survival made it no question for schools to embrace multi-linguistic education.

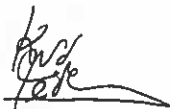
I was educated in Dutch, English, French and German from a young age. It wasn't easy learning these languages, and I struggled with only being exposed to three to five hours a week in each language. When I was 12, I was sent to a two-week French Immersion in a convent in Belgium. Following this, my marks drastically improved in all languages, not only in French.

I graduated with enough confidence that I embarked on travels to countries where I didn't know the language. When I was 17, I went to Malaysia on my own, to gain experience working at an advertising agency. We spoke English at the office and I could only have embarked on this adventure because of my trust in being able to express myself in this foreign language. I worked in Paris for one year after university; I wouldn't have been able to apply for the job if I had not understood and spoken French.

Moving to Haida Gwaii wouldn't have been possible without my early education in English and other foreign languages. Learning English helped me as an adult to feel truly part of this community; it helped me become a Canadian Citizen without the barriers of miscommunication and misunderstanding. I would not have felt so at home if I couldn't communicate fluently in English.

Understanding and being comfortable speaking a foreign language is such a gift to children. By taking this opportunity away from them, we will be limiting them in their options in the future. Whether they want to become a politician, or want to travel the world, or want to speak fluently Haida, they will need to exercise that part of their brain from an early age.

I sincerely hope you will reconsider your decision and decide instead to continue to support these young children and give them the choice to develop themselves as broadly as possible so they feel confident and free to explore this world, equipped with as many tools as possible.



Sincerely,
Kiki van der Heiden



From: Peter plake@haidagwaii.net
 Subject: Re: Some Evidence on Language education for the Package
 Date: June 26, 2016 at 7:27 PM
 To: shelley sansome ssansome@sd50.bc.ca

Thanks!

Confusing. First it sounded like (on 13th) we had until a week ago, then I was told that Friday was deadline. Still short, as more info coming in all the time. Up to when, on Tuesday, as I believe the board should be reading all submissions and prepared to discuss, of course. ;)

Sent from my BlackBerry - the most secure mobile device - via the TELUS Network

From: ssansome@sd50.bc.ca
Sent: June 26, 2016 6:22 PM
To: plake@haidagwaii.net
Cc: mjones@sd50.bc.ca
Subject: Re: Some Evidence on Language education for the Package.

Thanks Peter. We'll add it to all of the submissions that we receive up until Tuesday.
 Shelley

Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 25, 2016, at 9:36 PM, Peter Lake <plake@haidagwaii.net> wrote:

Dear Ms. Sansome,

I'd like this added to the package for the meeting on the 28th.

I recognize that submissions were to be in Friday. However, considering the remarkably short time allotted to study and consultation for such a dramatic reversal of policy, I would hope for and expect some flexibility on the part of SD 50.

The following articles strongly support the observations of Parents (see submissions and comments on the on-line petition) and Teachers of Haida and French, which report a dramatic improvement in the uptake of the Haida Language for students enrolled in the French Immersion programme.

Similar observations have been made by the Teacher of Gitksan in the French Immersion programme in Hazelton.

If the board truly is interested in restoring the Haida Language, they will withdraw all plans to cancel the enrolment in French Immersion this year and, instead adopt a version of the "Alternative Ammendment to Policy 3400" penned by Ms. Catherine Riggs.

This, as you will remember, calls for the adoption of a Haida Immersion programme as soon as it is ready (teachers and curriculum) but with French Immersion in the interim.

Here are two articles which support the observations:

https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/02/110201110915.htm#.V29E_IOLvSk.facebook

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/lite-bilingual/201506/can-second-language-help-you-learn-third>

Respectfully yours,

Peter Lake, MD.

Bilinguals find it easier to learn a third language

Date: February 1, 2011

Source: University of Haifa

Summary: Researchers set out to examine what benefits bilingualism might have in the process of learning a third language. They found that students who know two languages have an easier time gaining command of a third language than students who are fluent in only one language.

FULL STORY

Bilinguals find it easier to learn a third language, as they gain a better aptitude for languages, a new study from the University of Haifa reveals.

Prof. Salim Abu-Rabia and Ekaterina Sanitsky of the Department of Special Education, who conducted the study, set out to examine what benefits bilingualism might have in the process of learning a third language. They hypothesized that students who know two languages would have an easier time gaining command of a third language than would students who are fluent in only one language.

For this study, two groups of 6th grade students in Israel were chosen to represent a sample of students studying English as a foreign language. The first group comprised 40 students, immigrants from the FSU whose mother tongue is Russian and who speak fluent Hebrew as a second language. The second group comprised 42 native Hebrew-speaking students with no fluency in another language, besides the English being studied in school as a foreign language.

Each participant took part in two meetings: a group meeting and an individual meeting. At the group meeting, the participants were given tests that assessed reading strategy and familiarity with the orthography of each language -- Hebrew, English and Russian for the Russian speakers, and were asked to fill out personal questionnaires. At the individual student meetings, the researchers gave the Hebrew-only speakers a test in Hebrew and English, and the same tests with Russian added were given to those who were Russian speakers.

After comparing and merging the results of these tests, the researchers were able to conclude that those students whose mother tongue was Russian demonstrated higher proficiency not only in the new language, English, but also in Hebrew. They found that the total average between the tests of the two groups was above 13% in the Russian-speakers' favor. Some of the specific tests showed particularly wide gaps in command of English, the Russian speakers achieving the higher scores: in writing skills, there was a 20% gap between the scores; in orthographic ability, the gap reached up to 22%; and in morphology it soared as high as 35%. In the intelligence test (the Raven Progressive Matrices test), the gap was over 7% on the side of the Russian speakers. According to the researchers, these results show that the more languages a person learns, the higher his or her intelligence will be.

This team of scholars also noted that the fact that the Russian speakers had better Hebrew skills than the Hebrew speakers themselves indicates that acquiring a mother tongue and preserving that language in a bilingual environment does not come at the expense of learning a second language -- Hebrew in this case. In fact, the opposite is true: fluency and skills in one language assist in the language acquisition of a second language, and possessing skills in two languages can boost the learning process of a third language.

A New Language Barrier: Why Learning A New Language May Make You Forget Your Old One
Association for Psychological Science, ScienceDaily, 2007

Second Language Represented In Different Part Of Brain, Single Case Study Suggests
Catharine Paddock PhD, Medical News Today, 2009

Resting brain chatter predicts ability to learn second language
Tim Newman, Medical News Today

Stuttering: Causes, Diagnosis and Treatments
Medical News Today, 2015

Ethnic Minority Student Achievement in Mathematics in the Early School Years in Cambodian Bilingual Schools: CARE's Riel Mathematics Research Project
Frawley, Jack et al., Curriculum and Teaching

Babies Can Tell When You Switch Languages By Watching Your Face
Catharine Paddock PhD, Medical News Today, 2007

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Can a Second Language Help You Learn a Third?

The impact of a second language on third language learning.

Like 730

Posted Jun 02, 2015

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Post written by Aneta Pavlenko.

As bilinguals, one of our greatest hopes is that the efforts we have invested in learning a second language (L2) will also pay off when we learn the third one (L3). The more languages we know, the easier it should be to learn them, right? A positive answer to this question can have tremendous implications for language [education \(/basics/education\)](#). And yet researchers limit themselves instead to the non-committal "it depends." Why is that? And what does our success in L3 learning depend on?

The first undeniable advantage involves strategy. If you learned your L2 as a teenager or an adult, you have managed to figure out what strategies work best for you. The more [extraverted \(/basics/extroversion\)](#) among us enjoy talking to target language speakers, while the [introverts \(/basics/introversion\)](#) prefer to pour over textbooks and grammar books. I, for one, am an avid reader and foreign movie watcher, always hoping that new words will find their way into my [memory \(/basics/memory\)](#) effortlessly, in the process known as *incidental learning*. Research also shows that learners who are literate in both of their languages, and those who have metalinguistic knowledge, are in a particularly advantageous position because, among other things, metalinguistic awareness allows them to make comparisons and generate creative hypotheses.

Another area of potential advantage involves cross-linguistic similarities: learning a language typologically similar to the language or languages we already know allows us to utilize our prior knowledge through the process known as *positive transfer* or reliance on already familiar sounds, words,

areas subserve different languages of multilingual speakers. The only difference is that the use of the native or the dominant language is optimized and thus more automatic, and the use of other language means that all languages are not remain an independent observer in the process of L3 learning. Instead, it influences it, through both positive and negative transfer, in ways that are sometimes subtle and at other times pretty visible, as we have just seen. Our L1 may even team (/basics/teamwork) up with the L2 in messing with our L3. And our first language is not immune from influences either, as experienced by the English speaker who upon returning from a short, two-week, trip to Germany joyfully informed his friends that *He had drinken many beers* (although, in this case, we may also be seeing a beer effect).

All in all, we should probably expect that the effects of the previous languages on L3 learning will be diverse. On the one hand, we come to the learning process as more experienced and better equipped learners but, on the other, our languages are not immune to playing tricks on us. The best we can do is to relax and enjoy the learning process, as well as appreciate the insights we invariably gain about our languages and ourselves.

For a full list of "Life as a bilingual" blog posts by content area, see [here](http://www.francoisgrosjean.ch/blog_en.html) (http://www.francoisgrosjean.ch/blog_en.html).

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