



Literacy Squared®: Building Trajectories toward Biliteracy

"The roots of the term education imply drawing out children's potential, making them MORE than they were; however, when children come to school fluent in their primary language, and they leave school essentially monolingual in English, then our schools have negated the meaning of the term education, because they have made children LESS than they were" (Cummins, 1989).

What is Literacy Squared?

In its entirety, Literacy Squared® is a comprehensive biliteracy program that has been designed to accelerate the development of biliteracy in Spanish-English speaking children attending schools in the U.S. The Literacy Squared model is both research-based and research-tested. Its conceptual framework draws on research positing that a dire need exists for a new theory about literacy instruction for bilingual children (Bernhardt, 2003; Grant & Wong, 2003), and that second language literacy acquisition is greatly enhanced if learners are literate in their first language (August & Shanahan, 2006).

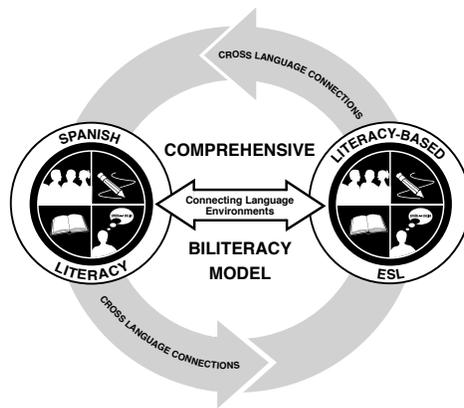
The framework is based on three research-based concepts suggesting that the improvement of schooling for emerging bilingual children can be accomplished via programs that develop biliteracy through conducting literacy instruction in Spanish as well as English, attending to the quality of instruction, and planning instruction to include direct and explicit attention to cross-language connections. This means that the language of instruction for literacy includes both Spanish and English, and that instruction in these two languages is planned in purposeful and intentional ways to create trajectories toward biliteracy. The Literacy Squared model includes authentic instructional approaches in Spanish and English that respect and focus on the internal structures of each of the languages, emphasizing direct, explicit, and collaborative instructional approaches that have proven to be beneficial for emerging bilingual children. Instruction is planned to include direct and explicit attention to cross-language connections, which enables children to learn how to use both of their languages in strategic ways to enhance their biliteracy development.

Components of Literacy Squared

Research. Literacy Squared is a school-based research project that challenges practitioners to rethink how they design and deliver biliteracy instruction to best capitalize on students' multiple linguistic resources. The model considers research in the field that calls for a more holistic, long-term look at the development of biliteracy (García, 2009; Grosjean, 2008). Each year, researchers on the Literacy Squared team collect data regarding the reading and writing development of students in Spanish and English. The analyses of these data have resulted in several completed longitudinal studies on the impact of student growth in biliteracy (See Technical Reports at www.literacysquared.org).

Assessment. The second component of the Literacy Squared project is biliterate assessment, which includes assessment in reading and writing in Spanish and English, and the reinterpretation of reading and writing assessments to better understand how the development of biliteracy is different from the development of either Spanish or English as monoliteracy. The Literacy Squared model posits that biliteracy is a higher form of literacy than monoliteracy. Biliterate assessment is unique to this project in that it acknowledges children’s developing skills in Spanish and English as systems that are parallel and connected rather than as separate linguistic systems. Only through bilingual assessments is it possible to approximate an accurate understanding of emerging bilingual students’ trajectories toward biliteracy.

Professional Development. The third component of Literacy Squared is the on-going and extensive professional development required to enact the Comprehensive Biliteracy Model. This component is sub-divided into two parts: (1) professional development for leadership (principals, literacy coaches, and school site coordinators); and (2) professional development for teachers delivering the Literacy Squared instructional model. The Literacy Squared instructional model contains several significant differences from more traditional bilingual/dual language programs. Differences include: paired literacy instruction beginning in kindergarten, literacy-based ESL, and an expanded view of literacy instruction in two languages including greater emphasis on oracy, writing, metalinguistic awareness, and cross-language connections. All of these components make the role of professional development critical to the successful implementation of the instructional model.



Comprehensive Biliteracy Model. The fourth component of Literacy Squared is the integration and coordinated delivery of the three fundamental instructional components: Spanish literacy, literacy-based ESL, and cross-language connections. Embedded in each of these instructional components are the four core elements of the comprehensive biliteracy instructional program: (1) oracy, (2) reading, (3) writing, and (4) metalanguage.

Oracy. In Literacy Squared, oracy is defined as an aspect of oral language, but it includes a *more specific subset* of skills and strategies within oral language that more closely relates to literacy objectives in academic settings. Oracy is yet another way that the Comprehensive Biliteracy Model is

unique. While there are numerous definitions of oracy, the Literacy Squared model suggests that teachers include three types of oracy components in their lessons. These include: *language structures*, *vocabulary*, and *dialogue*. Including oracy objectives daily in both Spanish literacy and literacy-based ESL Literacy Squared lessons is crucial.

Reading. The Literacy Squared Comprehensive Biliteracy Model includes reading instruction in Spanish and English, beginning in kindergarten and continuing through fifth grade. Research support for reading instruction as defined in Literacy Squared includes the need for authentic reading instruction in Spanish as well as the need to consider the ways in which learning to read in English as a second language differs from learning to read in English as a first language. Currently in the U.S., Spanish literacy instruction often mirrors English literacy instruction and commercially produced materials in Spanish are often translations of existing English materials. In Literacy Squared classrooms, teachers are encouraged to use methods to teach Spanish reading that are authentic to the Spanish language.

Writing. Writing instruction is a cornerstone in the Literacy Squared Comprehensive Biliteracy Model. It is as important as attention to oracy, reading, and metalanguage. Focused attention to teaching children the art and craft of writing in two languages enhances overall literacy achievement.

Metalanguage. Just as metacognition is thinking about thinking, metalanguage is thinking and talking about language; and, in the case of biliteracy, understanding relationships between and within languages. In Literacy Squared classrooms, metalinguistic awareness is developed in Spanish, in English, and across languages where children are explicitly taught how to make cross-language connections. In Literacy Squared, the development of metalinguistic awareness across languages is called cross-language connections. This conceptual construct was included in the Comprehensive Biliteracy Model to ensure that teachers use direct and explicit attention to support children in developing metalinguistic awareness about how Spanish and English are similar and different.

Strategies

In addition to utilizing explicit and direct literacy approaches such as modeled, shared, and collaborative reading and writing instruction, Literacy Squared has created unique strategies to accelerate biliteracy development.

Lotta Lara. Lotta Lara, a Literacy Squared innovation, focuses on developing students' oral language skills through explicitly planning oracy instruction while also increasing reading fluency and comprehension through repeated reading. In Literacy Squared, the Lotta Lara strategy is used in Spanish literacy in grades 1-3, and in literacy-based ESL from grades 1-5. One book or text is used three times in one week and is read by the students a total of nine times. While students read to increase their reading fluency and comprehension, equal emphasis is placed in oracy on the use of connected discourse and the rehearsal of pre-planned language structures.

The Dictado. *The Dictado* is a cross-language strategy that can be used in both Spanish literacy and literacy-based ESL. It is an adaptation of a methodology from Mexico and Central/South America. The Dictado is used within Literacy Squared to refine language arts skills in both Spanish and English, and it can be used to teach spelling, conventions, and grammar. More importantly, it can be used to teach the skill of self-correction and metalanguage. A unique quality of this strategy involves teaching children how Spanish and English are similar and different.

Así Se Dice. *Así se dice* (That's how you say it) is a cross-language strategy that validates translation as a constructive and worthwhile endeavor and engages students in a complex, sophisticated scrutiny of language that emphasizes the subtleties and nuances of communicating messages across cultures and languages. It is a strategy that is recommended in the intermediate grades.

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