Language Ability and Learning in Multilingual Environments: How can practitioners overcome the challenges?

Global Reading Network

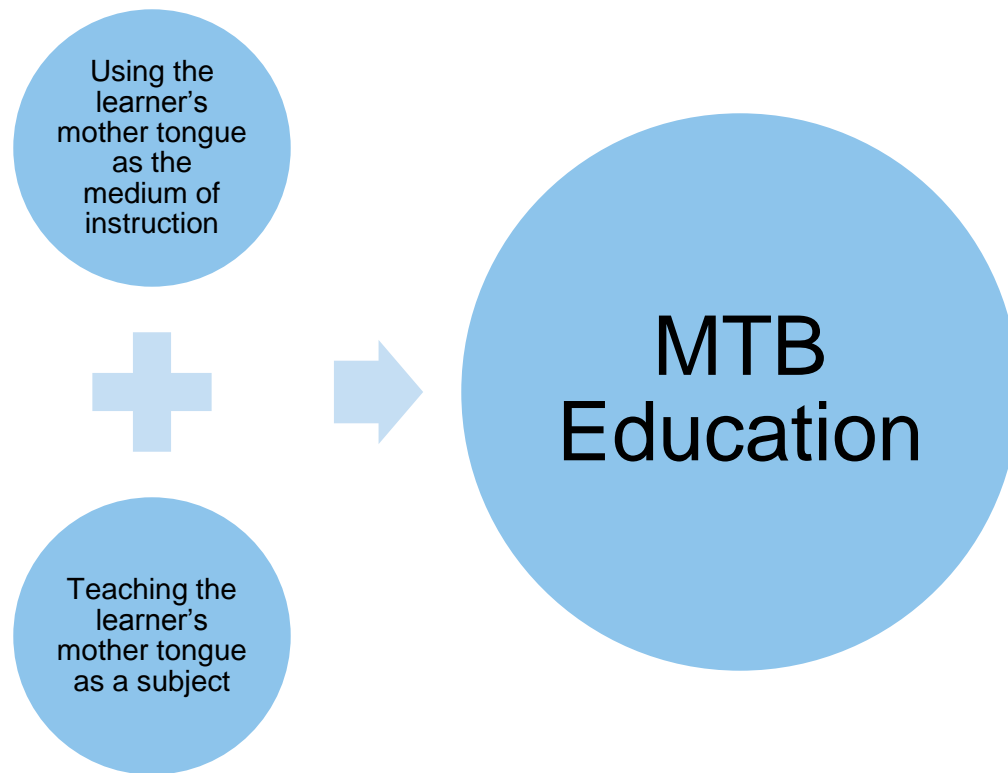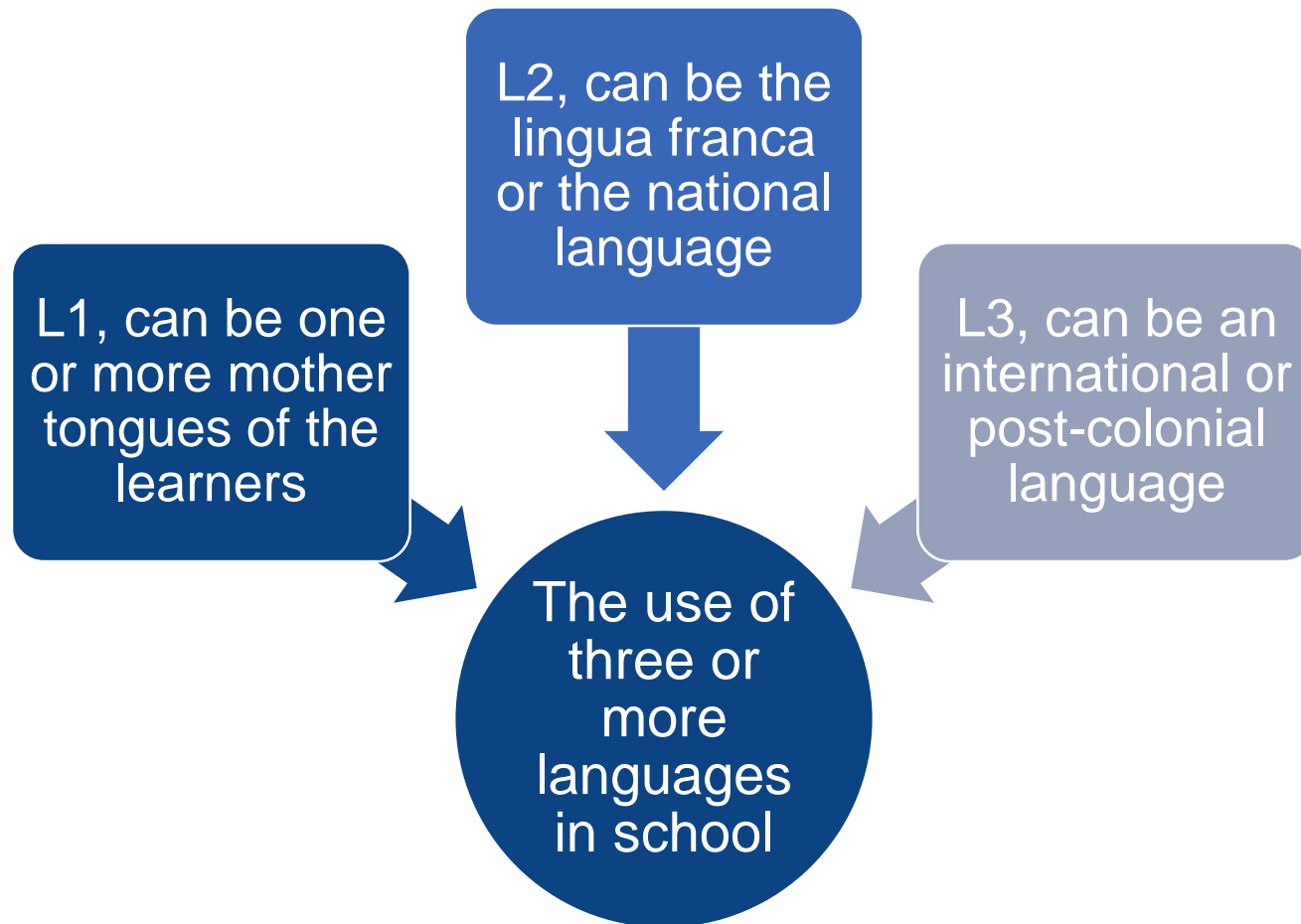# Approaches to Implementing Mother Tongue Instruction in Multilingual Classrooms

Dr. Eirini Gouleta (George Mason University)

Global Reading Network-Reading Within REACH Project

Presentation at the CIES Annual Meeting

March 10, 2015, Washington DC

What is Mother-Tongue Based (MTB) Education?

Using the learner's mother tongue as the medium of instruction

+

Teaching the learner's mother tongue as a subject

➜

MTB Education

What is Multilingual Education?

L2, can be the lingua franca or the national language

L1, can be one or more mother tongues of the learners

L3, can be an international or post-colonial language

The use of three or more languages in school

MLE Models and Approaches

1
- Mother-tongue based instruction

2
- Two-way bilingual education

3
- Mother-tongue based bilingual education

4
- Multilingual education

5
- Transitional bilingual/multilingual education
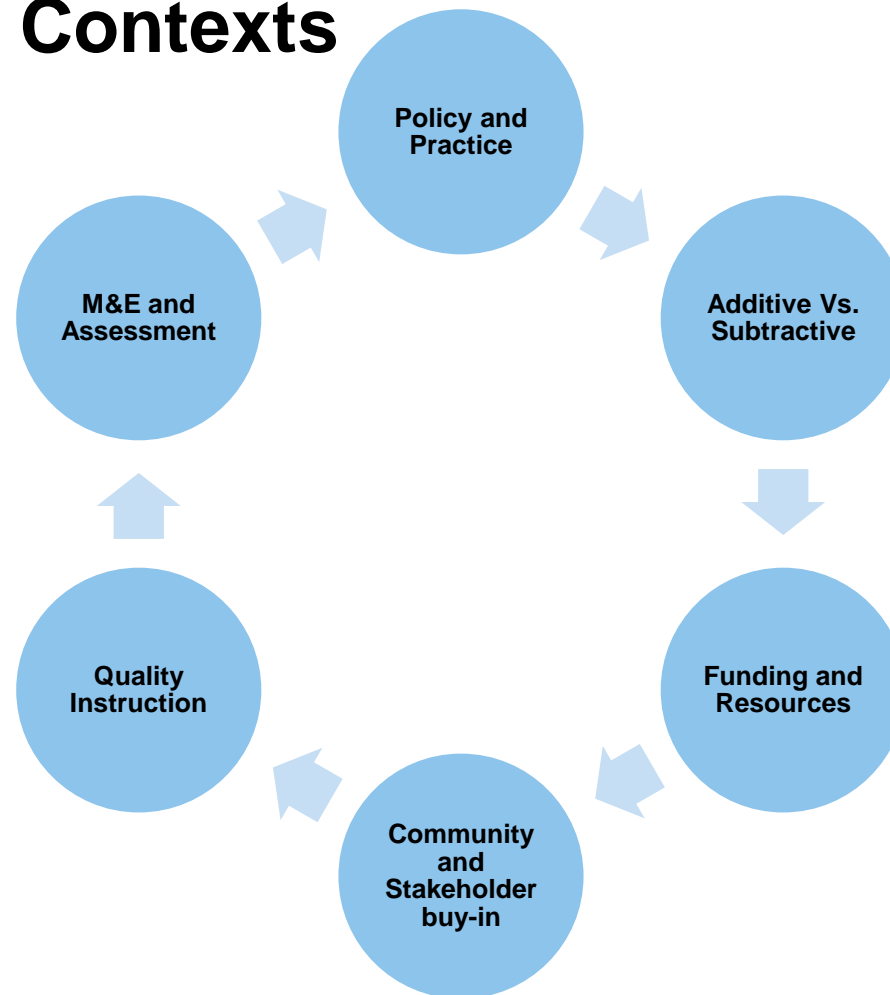 - Early-exit or Late-exit

6
- Maintenance bilingual/multilingual education

7
- Immersion or foreign language instruction and the submersion model

Considerations for MLE Implementation in Multilingual Contexts
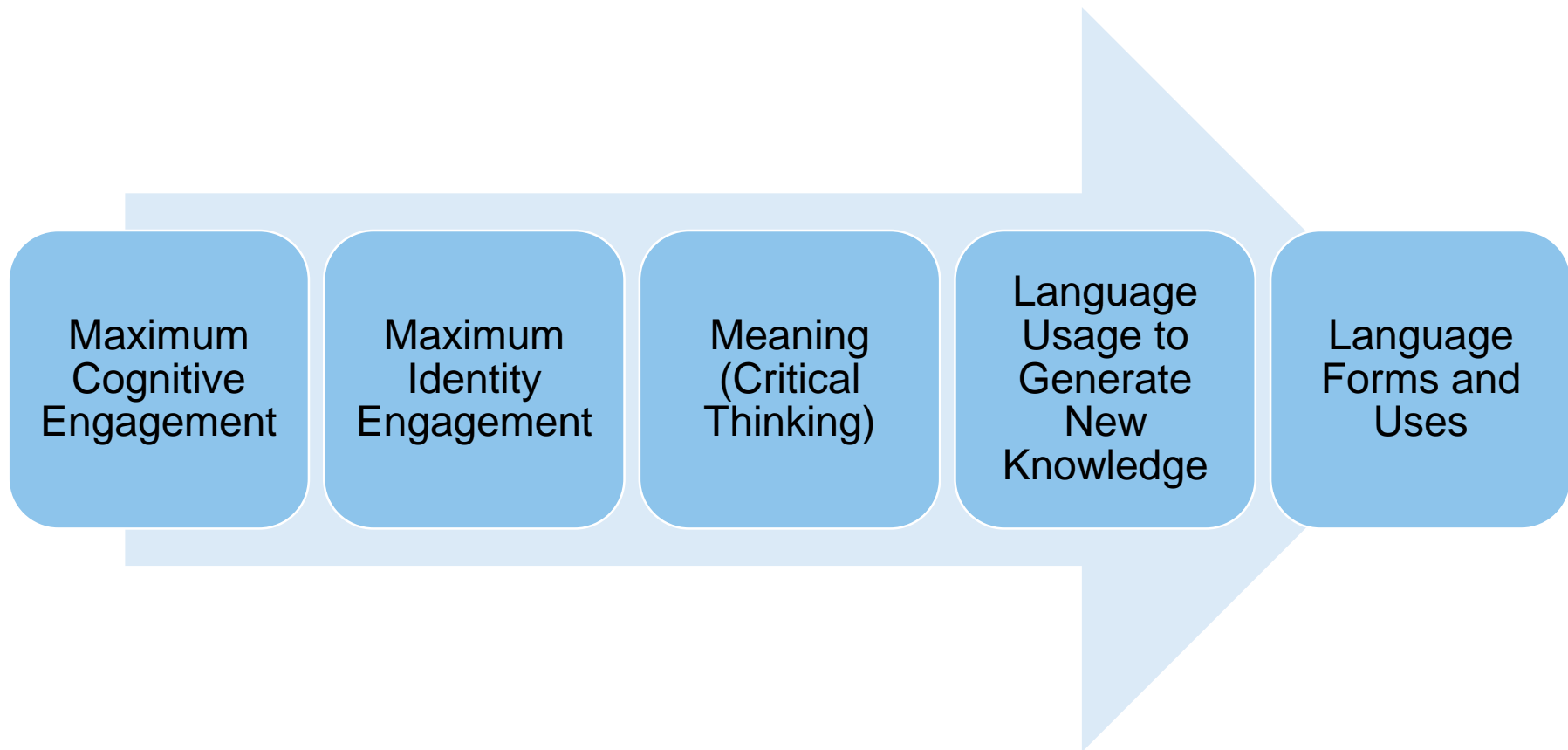
Mapping Multilingual Education in School
(Malone, 2005)

Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4
Children build fluency and comprehension in oral L1	Children build fluency and comprehension in oral and written L1	Children continue L1 literacy Bridge to literacy in L2	Non-formal systems,: reading clubs, distance education, community learning centers, and vocational training
Begin literacy in L1	Begin learning oral L2	Build fluency and comprehension in oral L2	
Use L1 as language of instruction	Continue using L1 as the medium of instruction	Use both languages for instruction and

Begin adding additional languages | Formal systems: use of all languages in primary, secondary and tertiary education |

Establishing and Sustaining Quality MLE Programs in Multilingual Contexts (Malone, 2005)

- Preliminary research
- Awareness and mobilization activities
- Recruitment efforts and ongoing training
- Developing a writing system (if needed)
- Adopting the government curriculum
- Curriculum development and literacy production
- Documentation and evaluation
- Coordination and collaboration among stakeholders

MLE in Practice (Cummins and Schecter, 2003)

Maximum Cognitive Engagement → Maximum Identity Engagement → Meaning (Critical Thinking) → Language Usage to Generate New Knowledge → Language Forms and Uses

Examples

- South Africa and Namibia (unintended consequences)
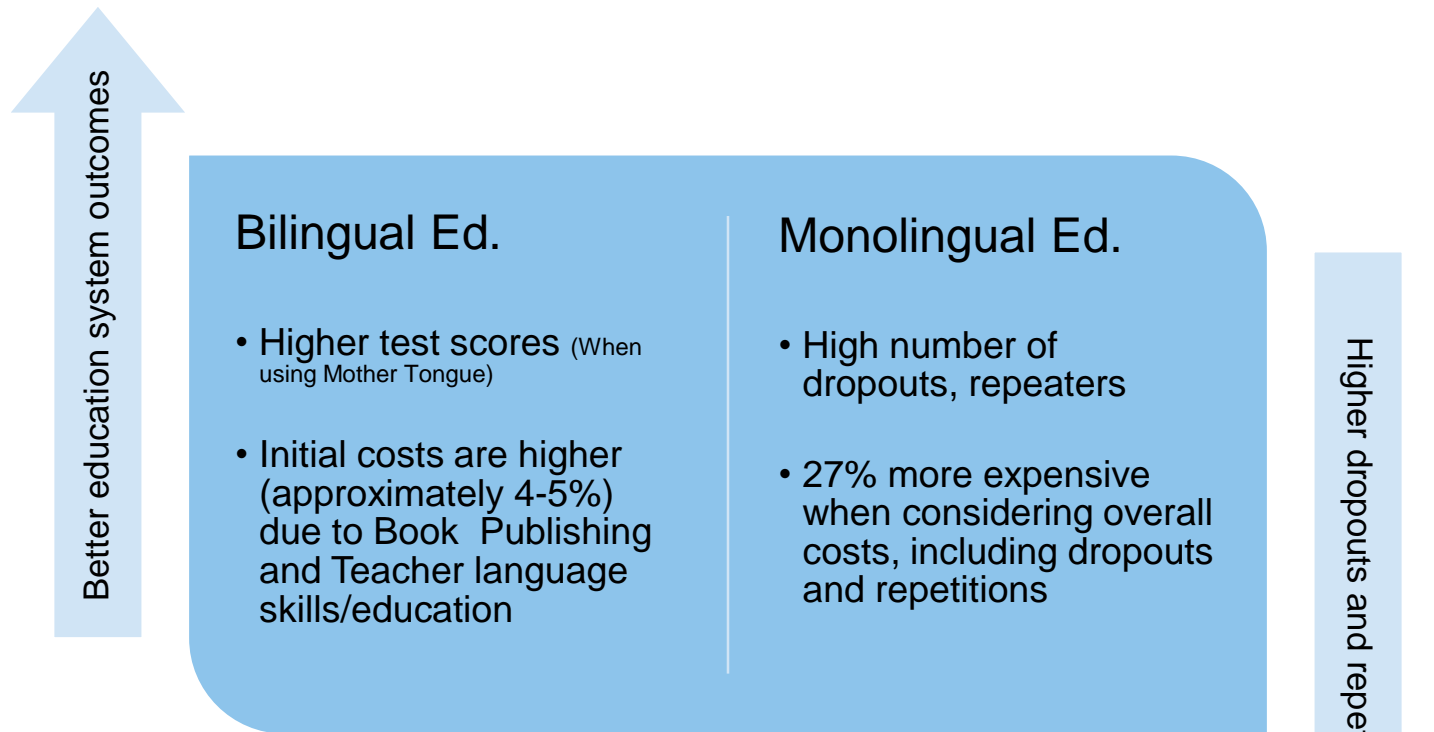
Guidance for Transitioning Learning and Reading from Language 1 to Language 2:
Competency and Language Thresholds at Which the Transition Can Be Made

Dr. Agatha van Ginkel – SIL

Global Reading Network-Reading Within REACH Project

Presentation at the CIES Annual Meeting
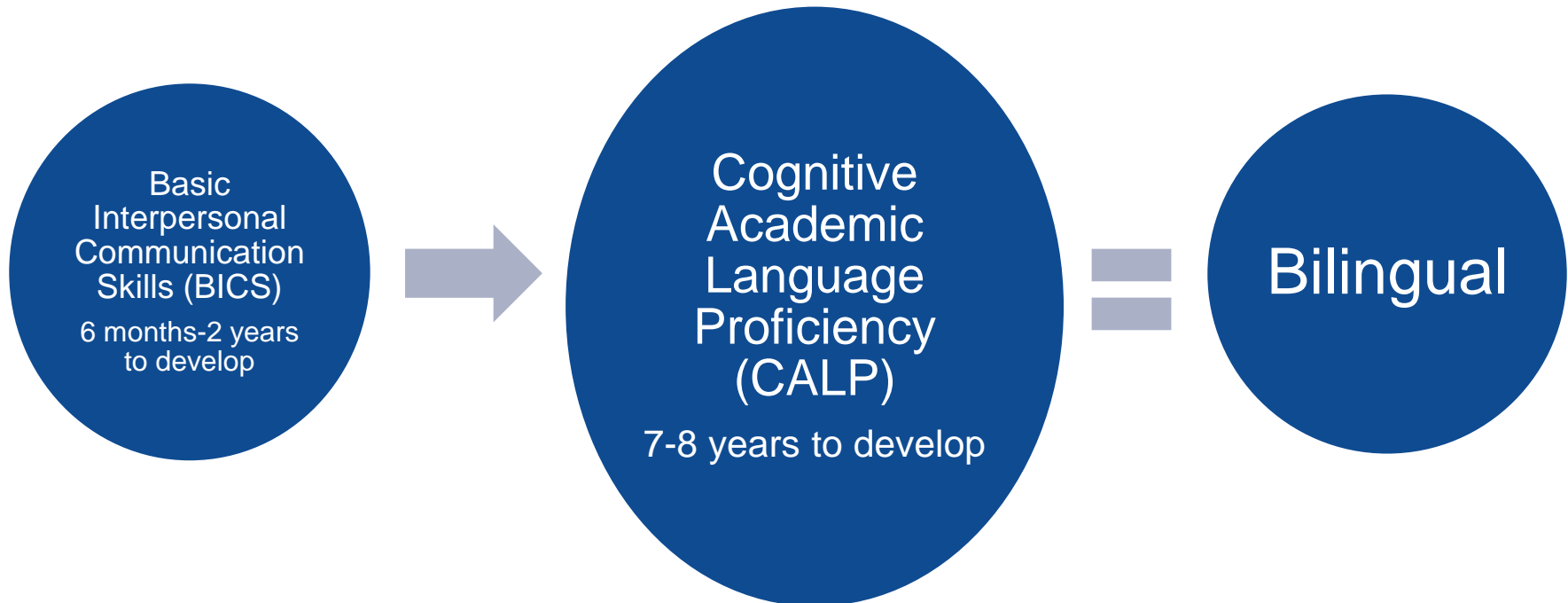
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Taking Care of Business –
Are bilingual programs more expensive?

Better education system outcomes →

Bilingual Ed.

- Higher test scores (When using Mother Tongue)

- Initial costs are higher (approximately 4-5%) due to Book Publishing and Teacher language skills/education

Monolingual Ed.

- High number of dropouts, repeaters

- 27% more expensive when considering overall costs, including dropouts and repetitions

Higher dropouts and repetitions →

To the extent that human capital, is a predictor of labour productivity, and hence of earnings, developing an MT educational stream will eventually result in higher earnings (Grin 2005: 20-21).
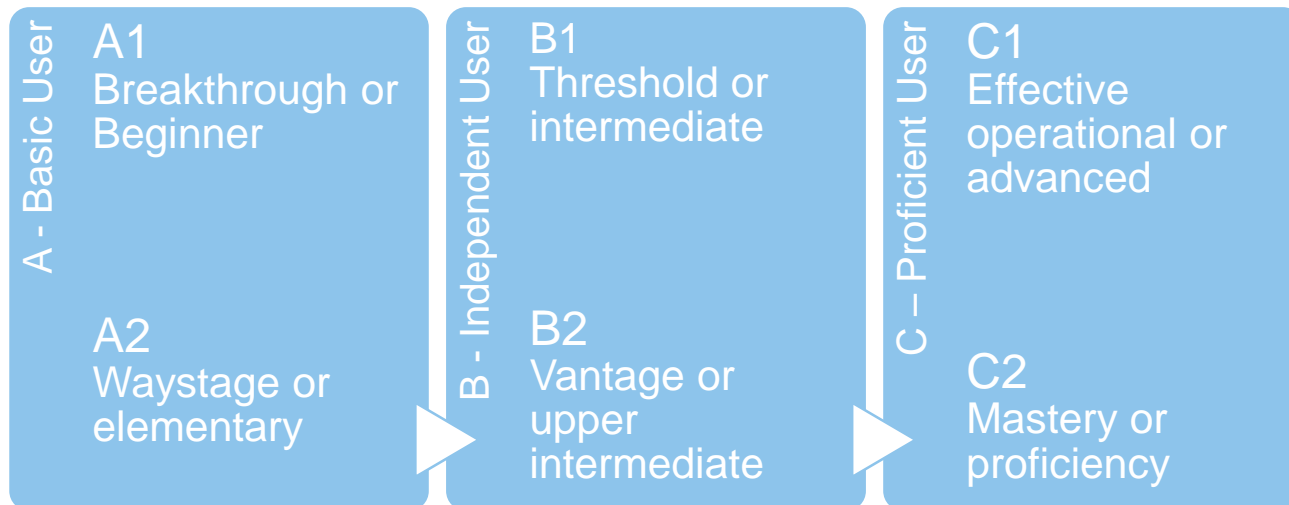
Bilingual Education
Conversational vs. Academic Proficiency in language learning

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)

6 months-2 years to develop

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP)

7-8 years to develop

= Bilingual

When can the transition from L1 to L2 be made? What are the language "thresholds" necessary? Competency and Vocabulary thresholds

Competency-based threshold
Students need to be at the B1 level in L1 before transitioning to L2

A - Basic User
A1
Breakthrough or Beginner

A2
Waystage or elementary

B - Independent User
B1
Threshold or intermediate

B2
Vantage or upper intermediate

C – Proficient User
C1
Effective operational or advanced

C2
Mastery or proficiency

Vocabulary threshold necessary to the transition

Very little research from developing contexts
Ample vocabulary size research to make inferences

New Language Learning (some examples)				
Language	New vocabulary threshold	4-5 words learned during contact session	5 sessions a week	30 productive weeks in a school year
English	3000	670 sessions	134 weeks	4.5 school years
French	2200	490 sessions	98	3.2 school years
Greek	3450	745 sessions	149	5 school years

How does age impact language learning?

- Common belief –young children learn languages faster. Not true.
  - Children who began English at age 10-11 progressed more than two years in the same time as compared to 4-6 year olds.
  - Important to make distinction between conversational and academic fluency
  - Cognitive maturity plays an important role

| Intensive interaction in class | 45 minutes of instruction time every day | Smaller class size | Highly qualified teachers who have a good command of the language |

Learning to Read in Bilingual Education Programs

Learning to read involves different process than oral language development

Processing the information happens when children can decode and comprehend the text.

Reading comprehension from L1 and L2 depends on:

- Vocabulary
- Background knowledge
  - Academic or content knowledge, structure of texts, and cultural knowledge

Decoding in two languages
(map the sounds to symbols)

- Letters/scripts
- Words
- Tone punctuation marks and capitalization

Processing the Information

Comprehension

Decoding
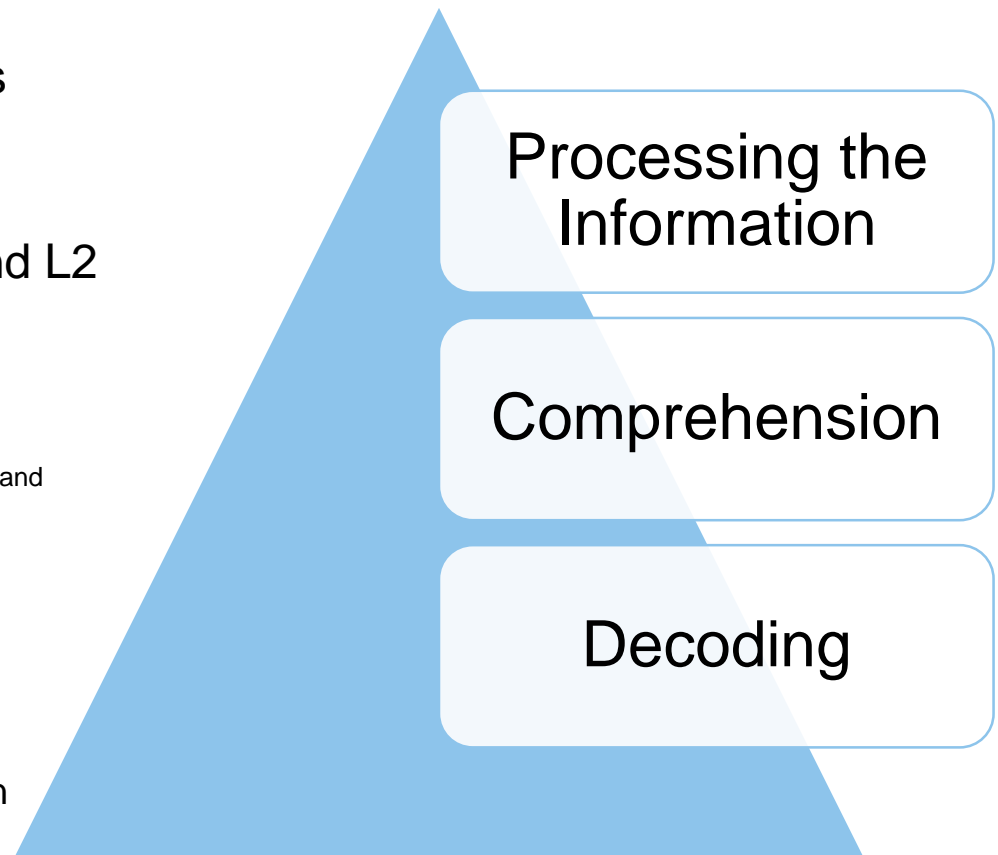
Factor	Contexts that Accelerate	Contexts that Impede
Second language or Foreign language	Spoken outside the classroom	Foreign language and only spoken in the classroom
Language level of teacher	Language level of the teacher is C1 or above (CERF)	Language level of the teacher is only B1/B2
Implementation of MTB-MLE policy	Accepted by the core stakeholders and implemented	Has been ignored or poorly implemented
Interactive learning	Interactive pedagogy is used	Lecture focused pedagogy is used
Child centered learning	Child centered learning is used	Teacher focused teaching is taking place
Interesting materials	Interesting and culturally relevant materials	General materials not specific for the context
Course book for each child	Available can also take it home	Few to no books available.
Status of the language	New language has high status	New language has a low status
# of students in the classroom	15 students or less	More than 15 students
Absenteeism	Very low	Frequent absenteeism of students and/or teacher

Concluding Advice

Time

- Give young students time to learn to read in a language <u>they already know well</u>.

- Give young students time to <u>learn sufficient vocabulary in the new language</u>, then have them learn to read in the new language, making use of their knowledge of reading in their first language.

Vocabulary and competencies

- <u>Develop a competency-based scale</u> that states what students need to be able to do (knowledge and skills) in the new language at different stages of their education.

- <u>Determine the threshold level of vocabulary</u> and competencies that enables students to benefit from education in each second or foreign language to be used in school.

Concluding Advice (cont'd)

Context

- Understand the context in which the new language is to be taught.

- At the national level, <u>adopt a flexible policy</u> that guides schools in choosing when to transition.

Materials

- Ensure that the <u>reading methodologies for both languages complement each other</u> and take into the account the <u>similarities and differences between the students' mother tongue and the added language</u>(s), at least for the first few years

Smooth Transition in Bilingual Education

Prof. Anwei Feng (University of Nottingham Ningbo China)
Global Reading Network-Reading Within REACH Project
Presentation at the CIES Annual Meeting
March 10, 2015, Washington DC

# Transitional Bilingual Models

- TBM is often inevitable for immigrant or indigenous children in schools

- TBMs have been seen as not effective because
  - Early exit models are adopted mostly
    - Academic performance suffers when transition is immediate or too early
    - Affective impact on minority language speakers as they perceive their language/culture as inferior
  - Children gain L2 at the expense of L1

However, TBM can be smooth:

- If late exit model is used (language minority children continue to learn and use their L1 at least till they finish primary school).

- When children's L2 has reached the CALP level.

1. Stakeholder Awareness

1st step of any effective bilingual program is to increase stakeholders awareness of the importance of bilingual education for language minority children

School Leaders

Community

Parents

Policy Makers

Successful Bilingual Program

Teachers
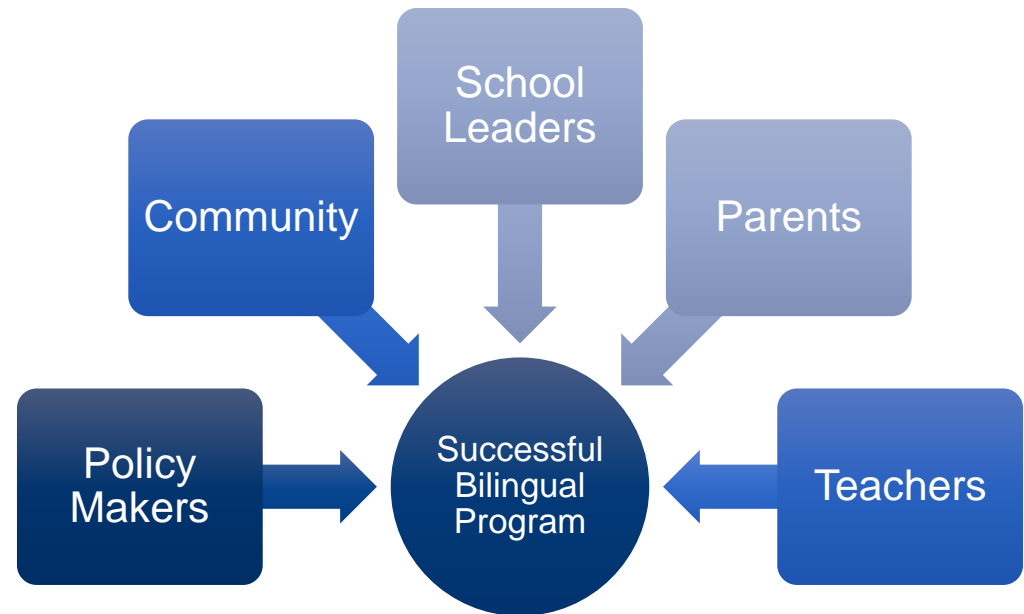
Many weak forms of transitions due to poor perceptions of the importance of L1

2. Make Transition from L1 to L2 as gradual and as late as possible

BICS (2-3 years)

CALP (5-7 years)

Only when children finish primary school are they able to cope with the cognitive and academic demands in their L2.

Late exit models should apply to all situations where immigrant and indigenous children are found

3. Use Community Resources to Enhance L1 Literacy

Not always possible to provide support for every language (depends on context and numbers of language learners)
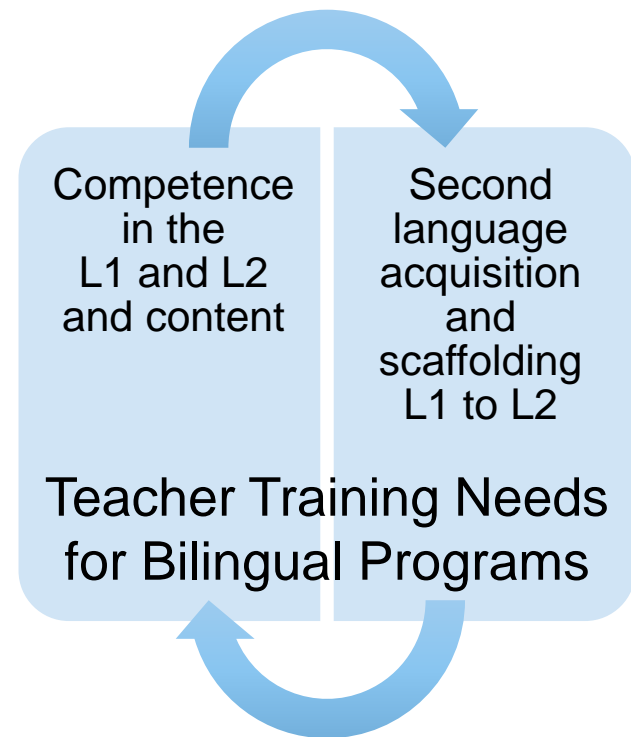
- Form a critical mass in the community committed to maintaining the language
- Establish Saturday/Sunday language schools
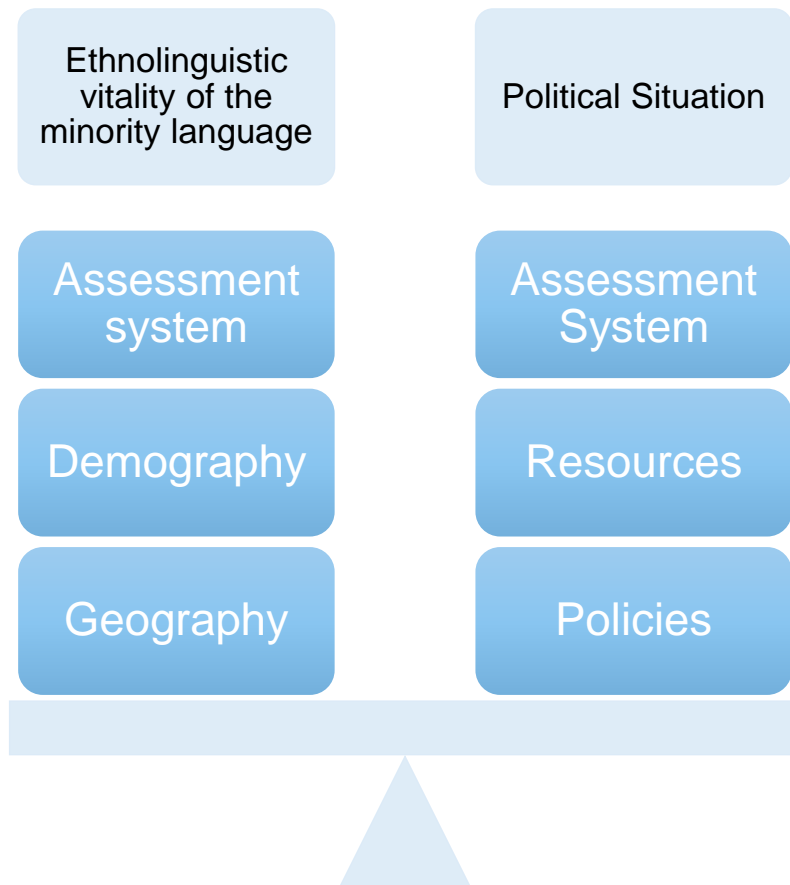- Support parents teaching their children in their language

Photo Credit – Dana Schmidt

4. Provide Training and PD for teachers and school leaders

- Teachers are the primary agents for smooth transition

- Bilingual teachers don't equal a bilingual program
  - Need to understand the complexity of bilingual education
  - Understand how to scaffold from L1 to L2
  - School leadership and curriculum must support bilingualism

- Teachers and School Leaders need to be educated not just in the languages but in the HOW behind bilingual education

Competence in the L1 and L2 and content

Second language acquisition and scaffolding L1 to L2

Teacher Training Needs for Bilingual Programs

5. Choose a model appropriate to the context

Ethnolinguistic vitality of the minority language

Political Situation

Assessment system

Assessment System

Demography

Resources

Geography

Policies

- Contextual factors poses real challenges to bilingual education

  *Ethnolinguistic vitality of the minority language (likelihood an ethnic minority group can maintain its language)

6. Start with yourself

- Individual teachers, parents and community members can make a significant contribution to bilingualism


Photo Credit – Dana Schmidt

Example:
Dong Village School in Guizhou, a small group of individuals helped children maintain their language and ethnic identity which enabled them to perform more effectively than their peers without the support

Summary

- Remember bilingual programs aren't simply theoretical, pedagogical or technical but fundamentally political
  - Tension between the dominant and the marginalized and to what extent these different expectations can be reconciled determines how effective transitional bilingual education can be.
  - The political will can be built by demonstrating the positive cognitive and affective effects of bilingualism.
  - Key to success rests with the commitment by the stakeholders.

Dominant Languages

Marginalized Languages
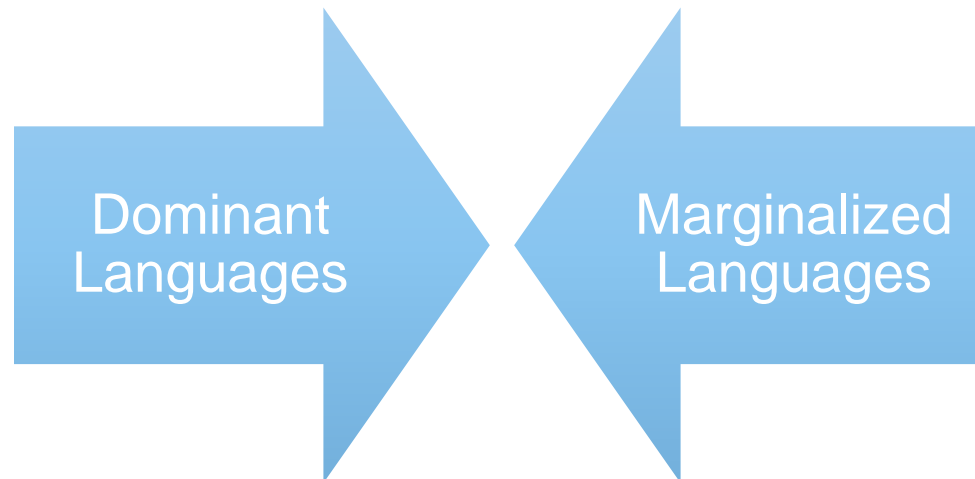
Resource about Trilingualism

6 year project carried out by many leading researchers in minority regions in China.

- Feng, A. and Adamson, B. (eds) (2015) *Trilingualism in Education in China: Models and Challenges*. Dordrecht: Springer.

Weblink: http://www.springer.com/education+%26+language/book/978-94-017-9351-3