

# The Effectiveness of Bilingual Verbal and Bilingual Written Instructions for EAL Students

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**Abstract:** *This study evaluates the effectiveness of bilingual verbal and written instructions for EAL (English as Additional Language) students in international schools. The EAL students often face challenges in understanding the subjects taught in English, their grades tend to be low, and their grades do not represent their true potential. By employing bilingual instructional methods, this research aims to bridge the linguistic gap and improve educational outcomes. A questionnaire was administered to Years 8 and 9 Computer Science classes that specialized for EAL students. The findings reveal that bilingual instructions are essential for EAL students to effectively learn in the classroom. Additionally, bilingual written instructions were found to be preferable to verbal instructions, as they provide a clearer understanding of the material. Even the questionnaire for the EAL students has to be written in Bilingual writing. Furthermore, bilingual instructions are useful for learning the subject matter, as they are primarily designed to facilitate understanding of the subject itself rather than to teach the English language. Fewer students believe that bilingual instructions for learning a subject offer the additional advantage of improving their English language skills.*

**Keywords:** bilingual instruction, bilingual verbal, bilingual written, EAL, questionnaire

## 1. Introduction

International schools have spread worldwide along with government schools, and the medium to deliver education is English. In some countries, where English is not the student's first language, students find learning subjects like Mathematics, Science, History, Physics, Computer Science, and Art more challenging. To bridge this language gap, schools differentiate these students. These students are commonly referred to as "English as Additional Language" (EAL) students.

To construct a new knowledge, students need a prior knowledge to activate their schema. Since EAL students may not have English as their prior knowledge, the new knowledge construction becomes challenging. Research shows that language learning, knowledge acquisition, and application are strongly interrelated (Magyar, Habók, & Molnár, 2022).

Recognizing this challenge, the subject teachers are trying to find a way for the EAL students to understand the material given while they improve their English. An ideal solution might involve a teacher who understands the subject deeply while mastering multiple languages fluently. However, as this is rare, alternative methods are needed. One such method involves using bilingual instructions through bilingual visual presentation slides and bilingual verbal explanations. All of these are made using both personal skills and technology. This study explores the effectiveness of these methods in helping EAL students, which also will be useful to teachers to conduct an effective lesson for EAL students.

### **Background of the Study**

English is the key language in education, offices, laws, and business, influencing various aspects of life (Dutta, 2019). For non-native speaker students referred to as English as an Additional Language (EAL) students, this language gap made learning the subjects in the school more challenging.

Bilingual education focusing on community languages can be successfully operationalized, promoting advantages for EAL students in mainstream classes (Molyneux, Scull, & Aliani, 2016). Bilingual verbal and Bilingual written instruction methods are designed to bridge the EAL students' language barriers for learning subjects to boost their academic performance. Bilingual verbal and Bilingual written instruction effectiveness can depend on multiple factors such as the teacher's understanding level of the subject matter and the teacher's proficiency in the student's first language.

Given these challenges and potential benefits of bilingual education, this study aims to explore the effectiveness of bilingual verbal and bilingual written instruction in the context of teaching Computer Science to year 8 and year 9 EAL students. By examining how these methods impact EAL student learning and engagement, the study seeks to provide insights to support EAL students in all educational subjects.

### **Problem Statement**

EAL students face challenges comprehending both verbal explanations and written presentation materials in Python Programming within the Computer Science subject due to language proficiency issues.

English as an Additional Language (EAL) students face significant challenges in their educational journey, particularly in subjects that require a strong understanding of technical concepts, such as Python Programming in Computer Science. These students often struggle with both verbal explanations and written materials, as their limited proficiency in English acts as a barrier to fully comprehending the subject matter.

This language barrier can lead to a cascade of issues. Firstly, the students may not grasp the fundamental concepts being taught, which hinders their ability to keep up with the curriculum. Secondly, their inability to understand instructions and explanations can cause frustration and anxiety, leading to a lack of engagement and motivation in the classroom. As a result, these students may underperform academically, and their grades may not accurately reflect their true potential and understanding of the subject matter.

The issue is further compounded by the fact that traditional teaching methods in international schools primarily use English as the medium of instruction. This approach often overlooks the unique needs of EAL students, who require additional support to bridge the language gap.

While these students are expected to learn both the subject content and improve their English proficiency simultaneously, the current instructional methods may not adequately address their needs.

This study recognizes the necessity of finding effective strategies to support EAL students in their learning process. One such strategy is the use of bilingual instructions—both verbal and written—that incorporate the students' first language alongside English. By providing instructions in both languages, the study aims to alleviate the comprehension difficulties faced by EAL students, enabling them to better understand the subject matter and potentially improve their academic performance.

However, the effectiveness of bilingual instructions in facilitating learning, particularly in technical subjects like Python Programming, remains uncertain. It is unclear whether bilingual verbal instructions, which rely on oral communication, or bilingual written instructions, which allow students to process information at their own pace, are more effective. Additionally, there is a question of whether these bilingual methods aid in the student's acquisition of the English language or if they simply serve as a temporary crutch, delaying the need for full English proficiency.

Given these challenges, this research seeks to investigate the effectiveness of bilingual verbal and bilingual written instructions for EAL students in international schools. The study aims to determine which method is more effective in helping EAL students understand and engage with the subject content and whether these bilingual strategies also contribute to their English language development.

### **Research Objectives**

- 1) To find whether bilingual instruction is effective for EAL students to learn the subjects taught.
- 2) To find which bilingual instruction method is more effective for teaching the EAL students: Bilingual visual or Bilingual verbal.
- 3) To find whether bilingual instructions help EAL students learn the English language at the same time.

### **Research Questions**

- 1) Is Bilingual instruction effective for EAL students to learn the subjects taught?
- 2) Which bilingual instruction method is more effective for teaching the EAL students: bilingual visual or bilingual verbal?
- 3) Do bilingual instructions help EAL students learn the English language at the same time?

## **2. Literature Review**

English is the most widely used international language, contributing to international communication and enhancing student integration in international educational programs (Doroshenko, 2022). English is the key language in education, offices, laws, and business, influencing various aspects of life (Dutta, 2019). English is taught and learned in many countries as an international language, and learners are fascinated by the increased international opportunities it brings. International schools exist around the world, but English often dominates as the sole language of instruction, limiting bilingualism (Kanno, 2009).

Students from different countries have their mother tongue, and many students struggle with subjects taught only in English. The teachers need to find a way to teach these students with English as an additional language (EAL). This study examines the effectiveness of using bilingual verbal instructions and bilingual written instructions for EAL students.

### **EAL Students & Challenges**

Students with English as an additional language (EAL) face challenges in achieving successful academic outcomes, and strategies are proposed to support their needs (Tangen & Spooner-Lane, 2008). Many EAL learners experience difficulties in understanding written and spoken text due to significantly lower levels of English vocabulary knowledge (Burgoyne, Whiteley, & Spooner, 2009). English as an international language is influenced by contextual, social, cultural, political, and economic factors, affecting its pedagogical implications worldwide. (Holborow, 1996).

In UK schools, EAL children that attend the schools show a significant difference in performance compared to L1 English speakers. Findings revealed aspects of good practice such as inclusive classrooms with differentiated learning. After some communication between the school – parents – and EAL children, it was found that many participants did not have sufficiently deep knowledge of multilingualism to harness the home language to foster English vocabulary and reading development. Teaching methods need to be more targeted to EAL pupils, particularly in subjects heavily dependent on language skills (Bailey & Sowden, 2021). Teaching methods need to be more targeted towards EAL pupils, particularly in subjects heavily dependent on language skills (Bailey & Sowden, 2021). To construct new knowledge, students need prior knowledge to activate their schema.

Since EAL students may not have learned English before, constructing new knowledge is challenging. Research shows that language learning, knowledge acquisition, and application are strongly interrelated (Habók, Magyar, & Molnár, 2022). Knowledge is best gained through reflection and active construction in the mind, based on past experiences, personal views, and cultural background. (Mascolo & Fischer, 2005).

The factors that affect students to have weak English learning (Rany, Jafre Zainol Abidin, & Mei, 2013) are as:

- English is considered a difficult subject to learn.
- Learning students depends on the English teacher as an authority.
- There is a lack of support for using English in home and community environments.
- Students do not have a lack or lack of exposure to the language as there are limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom
- Students have limited vocabulary skills
- Students have a reluctance and lack of motivation to learn English because they do not see an urgent need to use the language.

In addition, language anxiety is the feeling of tension and anxiety experienced by students in the classroom. However, language anxiety is a complex of self-perception, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to the process of learning a class language (Darmi & Albion, 2013).

Other physical reactions from students include discomfort in English classes. They feel nervousness, lack of confidence, and physical changes. Throughout the learning of the language, they prefer to be silent. They try not to embarrass themselves by making a mistake in responding so they feel it is safe to be passive. At the same time, they are ahead of other

students in the class who have better command of English. They also worry that their teachers will judge them and point out their mistakes to the whole class which could cause personal embarrassment to individual students. In an interview with a group of Malaysian tertiary students, they reportedly experienced anxiety and difficulty speaking in English which made them reticent and passive in the classroom.

Teachers need to understand the subject matter deeply and flexibly to help students create cognitive maps, relate ideas, and address misconceptions (Victoriano, Villaruz, & Alimen, 2022). This will support Einstein's famous quote: "If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." Reducing linguistic complexity in test questions improves comprehension for EAL students, leading to higher scores on unpacked assessment questions (Riccardi, et al., 2020)

### **Bilingual in Education**

Bilingual language acquisition research offers insights into language learning, production, comprehension, and processing, with potential for broader implications in understanding language learning, production, comprehension, and processing (Lieven, 2011). Bilingualism in education is crucial for modern individuals but implementing it in an organized manner is crucial for overcoming challenges in second language acquisition without harming linguistic psychology (Veliyeva, 2015).

Bilingual education and bilingualism have been shown to enhance phonological awareness, language variation, and social style among young female immigrants of Turkish origin in Mannheim, Germany (May & Dam, 2003). Bilingual experience sculpts the brain, affecting language acquisition, processing, and cognition, with no apparent difficulties for bilingual infants and adults (Costa & Sebastián-Gallés, 2014). Bilingualism is reliably associated with increased attentional control, working memory, metalinguistic awareness, and abstract and symbolic representation skills (Adesope, Lavin, Thompson, & Ungerleider, 2010).

Fun learning activities will have an impact on improving students' English abilities naturally. It helps students to reduce pressure during learning. Therefore, the ways of learning must be designed and adapted to the needs of students (An'Nisa & Suwartono, 2020). Using relevant visual elements and instructor narration in presentation slides improves student learning by using both visual and verbal channels, enhancing long-term memory and assisting visual learners (Strauss, Corrigan, & Hofacker, 2011). Reducing cognitive load in presentations through chunking, grouping information, and avoiding redundant text can enhance learning and reduce cognitive load (Alyami, Lauti, & Hill, 2016).

Bilingual children benefit greatly from early foreign language learning, and the authors recommend focusing on children's understanding and interests to effectively teach second languages (Pastushkova & Savateeva, 2021). Bilingual teaching in China can improve students' English language using competence, despite initial challenges (Cheng, 2002). Bilingual pupils in mainstream education can benefit from this book's practical guidance on teaching, planning, and working with bilingual parents to make the curriculum more accessible (Smyth, 2003).

Focused support in separate EAL classes in mainstream schools can provide valuable support for emergent bilinguals while achieving inclusivity remains a challenge (Chen, 2009). Peer support and translation are effective approaches for teaching both native and EAL students, and strategies for improvement include differentiation and addressing individual learning needs (Perry & Vlachopoulos, 2023).



### 3. Findings

This research measures the effectiveness of using bilingual verbal and written instruction methods for EAL students learning subjects like Computer Science. The British International School where we made this data collection is using the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) to differentiate the proficiency level (EFL, 2024). English proficiency levels are broken down into categories A1 (lowest) to C2 (highest) English proficiency. A1 is a beginner and typically an individual at this level can understand simple conversations and answer personal details about themselves. C2 is the equivalent of a native speaker of English. A B2 level is generally considered the level of English proficiency needed to access IGCSEs (years 10, and 11) and A-level (years 12, and 13) courses.

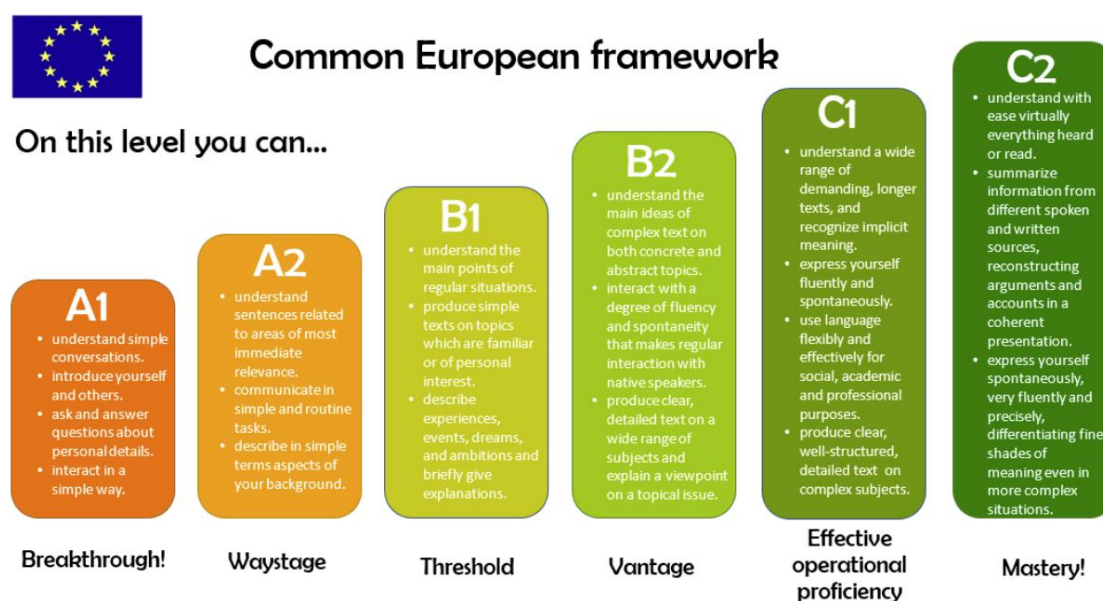


Figure 1: Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

We used a questionnaire administered to Year 8 and 9 EAL students from 8COM-i (EAL) and 9COM-i (EAL) classes. These classes are distinct from regular classes such as 8COM-A, 8COM-B, 8COM-C, and 8COM-D. EAL students can move to regular classes mid-term after they have passed the EAL test. While EAL students have the same regular tests and assignments as regular classes, they do not have a Final Year Exam, resulting in less pressure compared to their peers.

The EAL students are assessed termly. When a teacher has sufficient evidence to feel confident that a student has achieved A2/ B1 proficiency in English, the school will organize for the student to take the Oxford Placement Test (OPT) which confirm the student's level.

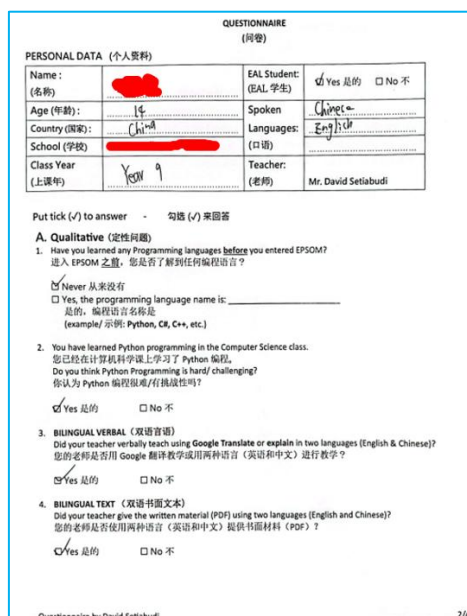
B2+ English proficiency is the ideal level to be at the start of Year 10 and their IGCSE course, but many students go on to achieve very high IGCSEs even if they only reached B1.

The 20 respondents are all students from years 8 and 9 who learned Computer Science, they are aged 12 to 15, and are from China, Japan, and Korea, with language proficiency at either PreA1 (lower than A1), A1, or A2.

The data collection is created using a bilingual questionnaire and the Likert scale, the research purpose is to measure the effectiveness (or desirability) of bilingual verbal and written methods for EAL students and also whether the bilingual instructions also help the students learn the English language at the same time.

This is one of the interesting finding: Our first version of questionnaire was only made in the English language, the students did not understand at all, their facial expression shows confusion, and informed us that they don't understand, the questionnaire data collection failed. All questionnaire paper was returned empty by the students. This failure was as expected.

We straight away replaced the second version questionnaire with the bilingual version right away. There are 3 kinds of bilingual questionnaires: English-Chinese, English-Japanese, and English-Korean version questionnaire. Version They gladly express to read the questionnaire as they are familiar with the language and fully understand the instructions and how to fill out the questionnaire form. We use the bilingual survey to ensure the research result accuracy. Language plays a crucial role in survey research, ensuring data quality by guiding question writing, instructions, and participant communication (Gabel & Sha, 2020).



The figure shows a bilingual questionnaire form titled 'QUESTIONNAIRE (问卷)'. It is divided into two main sections: 'PERSONAL DATA (个人资料)' and 'A. Qualitative (定性问题)'. The 'PERSONAL DATA' section includes fields for Name (姓名), Age (年龄), Country (国家), School (学校), Class Year (上课年), EAL Student (EAL 学生), Spoken Languages (口语), and Teacher (老师). The 'A. Qualitative' section contains four questions related to programming languages and bilingual teaching methods. The form is filled out with handwritten answers in Chinese and English.

PERSONAL DATA (个人资料)		QUESTIONNAIRE (问卷)	
Name (姓名):	[Redacted]	EAL Student (EAL 学生):	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes 是的 <input type="checkbox"/> No 不
Age (年龄):	14	Spoken Languages (口语):	Chinese
Country (国家):	China	Languages (语言):	English
School (学校):	[Redacted]	Teacher (老师):	Mr. David Setiabudi
Class Year (上课年):	Year 9		

Put tick (✓) to answer - 勾选 (✓) 来回答

**A. Qualitative (定性问题)**

1. Have you learned any Programming languages before you entered EPSOM?  
进入 EPSOM 之前, 您是否了解任何编程语言?

☒ Never 从来没有  
☐ Yes, the programming language name is: \_\_\_\_\_  
是的, 编程语言名称是 \_\_\_\_\_  
(example/ 示例: Python, C#, C++, etc.)

2. You have learned Python programming in the Computer Science class.  
您已经在计算机科学课上学习了 Python 编程。  
Do you think Python Programming is hard/ challenging?  
你认为 Python 编程很难/有挑战性吗?

☒ Yes 是的 ☐ No 不

3. BILINGUAL VERBAL (双语口语)  
Did your teacher verbally teach using Google Translate or explain in two languages (English & Chinese)?  
您的老师是否用 Google 翻译教学或用两种语言 (英语和中文) 进行教学?

☒ Yes 是的 ☐ No 不

4. BILINGUAL TEXT (双语书面文本)  
Did your teacher give the written material (PDF) using two languages (English and Chinese)?  
您的老师是否使用两种语言 (英语和中文) 提供书面材料 (PDF) ?

☒ Yes 是的 ☐ No 不

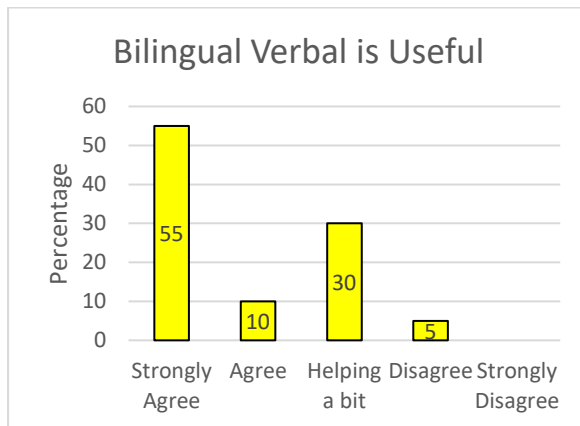
Questionnaire by David Setiabudi 2/4

Figure 2: Bilingual Questionnaire (English – Chinese – version)

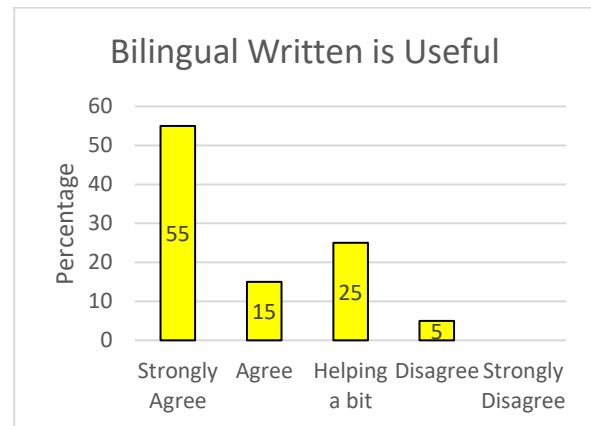
The questionnaires that were given to 55% Chinese respondents, 35% Japanese respondents, and 10% Korean respondents pointed out that:

- 1) The Bilingual teaching Instruction is useful: 85% said Yes, 15% said No
- 2) Prefer Bilingual Written: 60%, prefer Bilingual Verbal 35%, prefer Both 5%
- 3) Bilingual Verbal is useful: 55% Strongly agree, 10% agree, 30% said helping a bit, 5% disagree, and no one strongly disagrees.
- 4) Bilingual Written is useful: 55% Strongly agree, 15% agree, 25% said helping a bit, 5% disagree, and no one strongly disagrees.
- 5) Bilingual Instructions (Verbal & Visual) are useful for learning the subject (Python Programming): 45% Strongly Agree, 45% Agree, 5% Helping a bit, 5% Disagree, and no one said Strongly Disagree.
- 6) Bilingual Instructions (Verbal & Visual) is useful for Learning English: 35% Strongly agree, 15% Agree, 30% Help a bit, 20% Disagree, and 0% (none) Strongly Disagree.

Figures 3a and 3b below show the EAL students' preference for Bilingual Written instruction over Bilingual Verbal instruction.

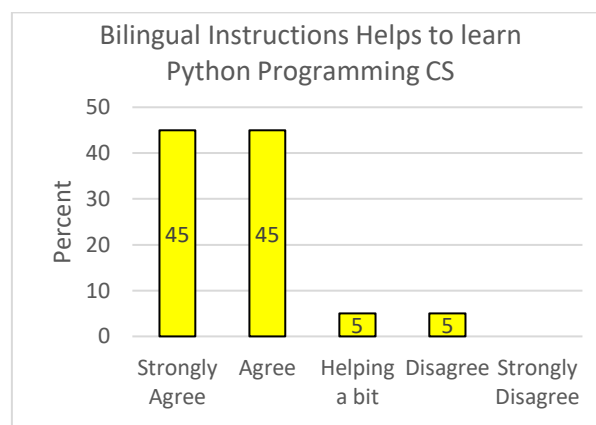


**Figure 3(a): How useful is Bilingual Verbal**



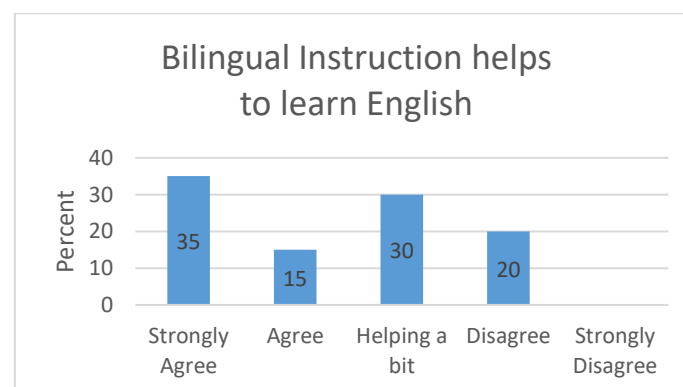
**Figure 3(b): How useful is Bilingual Written**

Figure 4 below shows that the majority (90%) of the respondents agree & strongly agree that Bilingual Instructions help the students to learn the subject (Python Programming in Computer Science).



**Figure 4: Bilingual Instruction helps EAL students to learn Python Programming report.**

Figure 5 below shows only 50% of the respondents agree that Bilingual Instructions are useful for EAL students to learn the English language.



**Figure 5: Bilingual Instruction helps to learn English reports.**



#### 4. Discussion

In international schools, English as an Additional Language (EAL) students learn their school subjects (such as Math, Science, History, Geography, Computer Science, etc.) while taking together EAL classes to improve their English proficiency. Initially, EAL students whose English is not their first language tend to underperform in these subjects; however, their performance typically improves as their language proficiency increases. Both teachers and students face challenges in transferring the knowledge of subject materials due to the language gap.

The EAL students may not just be facing the language gap problem, they may face mental health issues, family problems, safeguarding concerns, and more like the other students. Language difficulties are associated with peer victimization and bully perpetration, with a higher risk for children with persistent language difficulties (Øksendal, et al., 2021).

In constructivism, to construct new knowledge, students need prior knowledge to activate their schema. If a student never learned the language that the teacher uses to deliver instructions, then the students have no prior knowledge of that language, and the instruction will be meaningless, or low percentage of knowledge delivery. Research shows that language learning, knowledge acquisition, and application are strongly interrelated (Habók, Magyar, & Molnár, 2022).

The subject teacher needs to be creative to find the best way to deliver the subject knowledge to the EAL students, since the problem is the language gap, one of the effective approaches is the teacher needs to deliver the instructions bilingually: the first, using English, and the second: EAL students' first language. For example: In an EAL Computer Science class that has students from China, Japan, and Korea, the ideal teacher is expected to understand the subject well and be able to deliver the subject in English, and also the student's first language, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Korean fluently. All students should be treated equally, and no culture should be disregarded or overlooked.

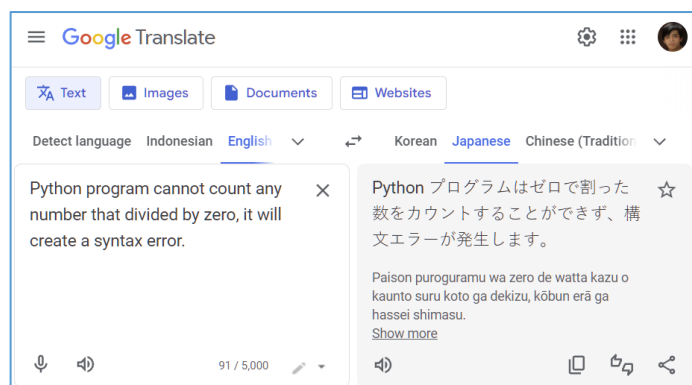
One of the condition of a perfect subject teacher (example: Computer Science, Math, History, etc.) for the EAL student probably has mastered the subject taught, having a fluent English and also mastered all of the first languages that EAL students use.

While a teacher that has not perfectly mastered those EAL students' first languages, then the teacher can make use of the technology to narrow the language gap such as the translator (skilled bilingual aides) to empower the teacher to deliver the instruction. Skilled bilingual aides are crucial for the success of plurilingual practices in EAL/D settings, where homogenous student groups allow for incorporating students' first languages in the learning process (Partridge & Harper, 2023). Machine translation empowers English as an additional language learner by enabling them to incorporate it flexibly, critically, and pragmatically into their learning and communication experiences across various stages of multilingual development. (Kelly & Hou, 2021). Modern ICT tools can greatly facilitate and enrich teaching translation and interpreting skills to students of language specialties, but their effectiveness depends on how they are used and teacher competence (Vasilieva & Streltsova, 2023). The translator may not produce a perfect translation, as the technology is still being developed and updated, but the online translator provides a closer approximation of the intended meaning of the instruction. The product of the bilingual instruction aids is bilingual verbal and bilingual written material for the students.



**Figure 6: Bilingual written instruction (English – Korean) for teaching Python programming in a presentation slide**

The Bilingual written instruction can be given through presentation slides, printed materials, or an electronic file. This should include English and the EAL student's first language. The teacher should take extra time to create this learning differentiation. If there are EAL students from Japan, Korea, and China in the classroom, then the presentation slide should be created in three bilingual versions: English-Chinese, English-Japanese, and English-Korean version. All students should be treated equally.



**Figure 7: Bilingual verbal instruction using computer software to aid the teacher.**

Effective bilingual verbal instruction can be more effective/ better, when the teacher is fluent in the EAL student's first language, allowing the teacher to directly and orally deliver the message. It takes an effort for a teacher to learn the student's first language. An online translator can be used to assist in the teacher's teaching, but it's best if the teacher can speak their first language directly. A teacher who can speak the EAL student's first language is preferable, as it helps the child learn English through multi-element turns, combining words and gestures. (Mahon, 2009). Therefore, a teacher who wants to connect with EAL students and create a closer bond should make an effort to learn their first language.

Bilingual children benefit greatly from early foreign language learning, and the authors recommend focusing on children's understanding and interests to effectively teach second languages (Pastushkova & Savateeva, 2021). Bilingual pupils in mainstream education can benefit from this book's practical guidance on teaching, planning, and working with bilingual parents to make the curriculum more accessible (Smyth, 2003).

Teachers should prioritize providing more bilingual written instructions, as students have found them to be more effective than bilingual verbal instructions. Although bilingual instructions are provided in two languages, only some students will find them useful for improving their English proficiency.

When creating a questionnaire for EAL students, teachers should create a data collection method (such as questionnaire) in bilingual to prevent misunderstandings/misinterpretations.

## 5. Conclusion

Students with English as an Additional Language (EAL) face challenges in achieving successful academic outcomes in the subjects they learn. The subject teacher plays a significant role and needs to put extra effort into delivering instruction, preparing materials, and using technology to aid instruction delivery as differentiation.

Here are important considerations for subject teachers working with EAL students:

- 1) Provide bilingual verbal & written instructions for EAL students as this is essential to learn the subjects, such as Python programming in Computer Science.
- 2) Bilingual written instruction is preferable compared to bilingual verbal instruction.
- 3) Bilingual instructions are not too effective for learning English, as the instructions are primarily designed to facilitate learning the subject, not the English language itself.
- 4) A bilingual questionnaire is required to collect data from EAL students rather than an English-only questionnaire to ensure accurate results, understanding their needs, and avoiding misconception.
- 5) All EAL students should be treated equally. If inside the EAL classroom, there are students from 3 different countries, for example: Japan, Korea, and China in the classroom, then the presentation slide should be created into three bilingual versions: English-Chinese, English-Japanese, and English-Korean version.

These are the strategies to increase the effectiveness of bilingual instructions (Verbal and Written):

- 1) Provide a shorter but clear explanation: This requires a deep understanding of the subject by the teacher about the related subject. A teacher with deep subject knowledge can make explanations shorter and simpler for EAL students.
- 2) Design bilingual written presentations to include fun learning elements, adapting to students' needs and using relevant visual aids to help visual learners.
- 3) Designing the bilingual verbal should use the correct spelling and intonation to deliver a correct message and avoid misconception. Use a reliable translator to aid teaching.
- 4) While the EAL students learning English to narrow the language gap, on the other side the subject teacher can put some effort into learning their first language.
- 5) While the EAL students learning English to narrow the language gap, on the other side the subject teacher can put some effort into learning their first language.
- 6) The EAL students sometimes come with complex problems not only the language gap, including also mental health issues, family problems, safeguarding concerns, and more.

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