

Brock, C. (2000). Creating possibilities to read others' worlds: Exploring a mediator's role in bridging cultural boundaries. *Reading and Writing Quarterly, 16*, 361-379.

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Summary: This study involved an instructional and research intervention in a mainstream 5th grade classroom in order to improve the reading comprehension of an English as a second language (ESL) student. The intervention consisted of a "mediator," who was a bilingual student. The mediator helped the researcher better understand the ESL student's efforts at reading comprehension and the role that his first language, culture, and understanding of English might play on his school literacy learning. The mediator also helped the ESL student. For example, when the ESL student did not understand a word he would not ask for help publicly and thus often lacked the information needed. However, the ESL student did feel comfortable asking the mediator in his native language to explain what the unknown word was.

Assumptions:

- Numbers of ESL learners in schools are rising.
- Both language and learning are social events.
- Effective participation in a classroom community involves not only knowing the dominant language in use, but also observing the subtle ways that language is used to interact within that community (enculturation).
- Enculturation occurs through interaction and support of those who are already fluent in the dominant language use and culture.
- Student mediation is a useful tool to help enculturate a student into a classroom culture and can therefore be useful in helping students achieve higher literacy and comprehension results.

Results:

- A bilingual student mediator was useful in providing an ESL student with information and educational assistance to improve reading comprehension in a mainstream classroom.
- Through the use of a bilingual student mediator, the researcher gained a more accurate view of reading comprehension by an ESL student.

Conclusions:

- The use of a bilingual student mediator in classroom literacy events with second language learners provides opportunities for ESL students to improve their reading comprehension during mainstream classroom instruction.

Suggestions for Teachers:

- Support bilingual students in the role of mediator to increase learning of mainstream ESL students.

Suggestions for Literacy Leaders:

- Examine the role of bilingual student mediators throughout mainstream classrooms in the middle grades.