

JALT Conference 2015 Reports

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At JALT National, LiLT member Anna Husson Isozaki participated in a biliteracy forum held by the bilingualism SIG, along with Alec McAulay and Susan Miyake. She focused on shared enjoyment of children's and young adult literature read aloud or listened to, as a base for building future fluent biliteracy. With researchers such as Charles Browne pointing out the dearth of daily life spoken vocabulary (well less than one thousand words) and television and radio offering counts only slightly over one thousand, compared to literature (a difference upwards in the thousands), it is easier to understand why hearing stories read aloud is so essential and effective for both initially freeing self-expression, and later, for empowering literacy in young bilinguals. Recent research illuminates the connections listening to literature read aloud build toward biliteracy for bilingual children. Tomlinson (2000, p. 526) posited an "inner voice" activated during reading. Subsequent empirical research has given evidence of precisely that, and has shown that skilled, fluent reading requires a great deal of listening in language experience to build and empower that inner listening when reading fluently – even superimposing the sense of oral rhythm and stress onto the written page (Ashby, 2006; Stephens, 2011a, 2011b, Whalley & Hansen, 2006). Within just this past year further research has come out, showing decisively that even for EFL (rather than already bilingual) readers, audiobook-supported reading greatly improved both comprehension and reading speeds compared to silent reading conditions (Chang & Millett, 2015).

With classic children's literature and novels available to read aloud or listen to via CD or downloads, there is much to intrigue story-loving children and satisfy the minds of their literature loving elders. Listening together to moving, memorable stories creates a lasting base for sharing and discussion, and repeated listening, with readings before or even long after, connect naturally with the genius of the young brain saying "read it again" – and build solid ground for fluent biliteracy as well (Stephens, 2011a, 2011b).

References

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