



speaking in ἸΦΝ&ρτΞ

Study Guide

Table of Contents

Introduction...3

Objectives...3

Grade Levels...3

Suggested Subject Areas...3

Activities: Schema Building...4-6

Assessment...6

Website Resources...7

Press about the Film...7

Press about the Issue...7-8

Thanks...8

Introduction

This educator guide explores students' attitudes and perceptions about language education and the ways in which language can create and reflect broader social issues. As the directors of the film explain, "Our attitudes about language reflect much bigger concerns: that language is a metaphor for the barriers that come between neighbors, be they across the street or around the world."

The intention is to encourage students to examine the social and cultural implications of changing demographics in contemporary society and the demands of an increasingly global economy. In this context, the question central is: In the 21st century, is knowing only English enough? Students are invited to think critically about bilingualism, in terms of employment opportunities, family connections, and personal development, but also in terms of new ways of thinking and being in the world, i.e. through developing a global consciousness.

Objectives

At the end of these activities, students will be able to:

- Understand the key arguments that underpin language education and bilingual immersion programs.
- Comprehend and examine different debates and perspectives on the issue.
- Research language immersion programs.
- Critically interpret opinion and information.
- Review and discuss the issues in as broad a context as possible.

Grade Levels

Speaking in Tongues is recommended for 5th through 12th grades and adult students in colleges and adult schools. Teachers are encouraged to adapt or scaffold these activities to meet learning objectives for students at different grade levels.

Suggested Subject Areas

Anthropology
Chinese
English
ESL
Ethnic Studies
Foreign language

Journalism
Peer/Youth Issues
Political Science
Social Studies
Sociology
Spanish

ACTIVITIES

Schema Building

As a paired activity, invite students to discuss the following questions about language:

- Do you speak more than one language?
- If so, which languages do you speak?
- What language do you speak at home? Is this your parents' first language?
- Do your parents like you to speak other languages?
- If so, why might that be?
- Would you like to learn other languages?
- Do you think speaking other languages would offer benefits? What might they be? What disadvantages might there be in speaking another language?
- Do you think it matters if you can read and write in a second language? Why? Or why not?
- How might your answers be different if you speak English at home? If you speak another language?

Encourage students to share their ideas with the whole class.

- 1 **Screen the Trailer** for *Speaking in Tongues* at <http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/>
Ask students if this trailer encourages them to view the film? Why?
Give students ten minutes to summarize the key idea(s) presented in the trailer and to free-write a response.

Alternatively or in addition, show one or two of the **Video Extras** at http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/about/video_extras/ and invite students to identify and discuss the key idea, for example the idea of a dual language classroom.

- 2 **Pre-Viewing Activity**
Ensure students fully understand the concept of a language immersion program. Then explore with the class why they think the filmmakers chose to make this film. [It may be useful to explain that the filmmakers' children go to a language immersion school, with their 13-year-old conversationally fluent in Mandarin, Cantonese and English while their eight-year-old speaks Cantonese and English and understands some Mandarin.] Students can read the director's statement from the film's press kit for background.

- 3 **Focus for Viewing**
As they watch the film, ask students to think about how they feel about the bilingual classroom and the stories of the four children.

- 4 **Screen *Speaking in Tongues***
Again encourage students to free-write a response to the film before moving to the post-viewing discussion. Invite them to share their thoughts and the ways in which the stories of the four children resonate—they can choose an example from one of the stories that speaks to them in particular.

Review the question: why did the filmmakers choose to make this film? Invite students to add any further thoughts.

5 **Post-Viewing Activity**

As a collective activity, list on the board the arguments presented in the film that support bilingual education and oppose it. What were parents saying? What did the children think? Where were the different viewpoints coming from e.g. educators, parents, the “English-only” movement, students etc.

Assemble students in groups, and allocate ONE of the following quotations to each group for discussion. Share responses with the whole class.

“There is no country that has more linguistic assets. But we seem to take pride in being monolingual and we even try to amend our constitutions to make sure that we remain monolingual when the rest of the world under globalization is learning second and third languages while we are essentially shooting our own feet. It is a national question. What does it mean to be an educated person in America today?”
– Dr. Ling-chi Wang (Scholar & Activist)

“U.S. businesses eagerly seek bilingual workers. The Department of Defense spends millions to teach strategic languages. Yet voters have passed ‘English Only’ laws in 31 states.”

“In this country, so much is offered to the children to speak other languages. We don’t have to teach it in school. We really don’t. It’s taken away from their other curriculum. In America we should speak English. This is America. I don’t think I should be paying my taxes for someone else to learn a language.”
– Kelly’s Great-Aunt

“San Francisco’s School Board unanimously passed the resolution offering all students the opportunity to become bilingual. With needs growing and resources shrinking, they are working to make this idea a reality.”

Conclude by asking the whole group to consider the following questions:

- What new insights or information did you gain from this film?
- Did anything in the film surprise you? If so, what was it?
- Did you change your view or are you thinking differently now?
- What did the filmmakers intend to communicate? Do you think they succeeded?

6 **Post-Viewing Activities—A Media Literacy Framework**

What do students bring to the film?

As a paired activity, invite students to explore their own background and the way it impacts their response to the film by asking each other the following questions.

- What is your native language?
- Do you speak more than one language?
- What language do you speak at home?
- Is there more than one language spoken in your home?
- Has there been a time when you haven’t been able to understand a relative or member of your family? How did you feel about the experience?
- Have there been occasions when you haven’t been able to understand your teacher or another student? What does that feel like?
- How has your personal experience affected your viewing of the film?

In the whole group examine the way background and experience impacts the viewing of this film.

The subjects of the film

- What do you learn from this film about Julian, Jason, Kelly and Durrell?
- How are they introduced? What does each scene tell you about their view of a bilingual education?
- What does Julian/Jason/Kelly/Durrell want for himself/herself now and in the future? Draw upon statements from the film to support your answer.
- From Julian's, Jason's, Kelly's or Durrell's perspective, what advantages will result from speaking a second language?
- Are there disadvantages that they identify?

Encourage students to talk about the young people in the film. Would they like to emulate their experiences with language? Will Julian/Jason/Kelly/Durrell have more opportunities ("have an edge") through their proficiency with language? Were students moved by any scene in particular? How did this scene impact the argument being made?

About the topic:

- Write a sentence to explain the significance of the film's title.
- Explain how immersion differs from bilingual education.
- Summarize the views and values that are endorsed in *Speaking in Tongues*.
- Summarize the views and values that challenge this perspective in the film.

7

Research Activity

Use the *Speaking in Tongues* website to learn more about immersion programs. Research other countries. What are the differences and similarities in bilingual education?

How do other countries handle foreign language learning?

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/blogs-websites/>

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/research/>

Assessment

Choose from the following activities, according to the grade level of the class:

- Direct students to the blog at <http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/our-blog/>. Ask students to read two or three of the blog posts and post a comment on **one** of them.
- Suggest students visit the *Speaking in Tongues* Facebook page, read through the comments and post a comment in reply <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=40948576591&v=wall>
- If students feel they have something to add to the discussion, a point that hasn't been made, suggest they make their case and upload a video recording their viewpoint to YouTube. Post the video on the *Speaking in Tongues* Facebook page.
- For 9-12th grades—ask students to write a 500-word review of the arguments and perspectives discussed in class. They should draw upon the case studies of the four children represented in the film to support their arguments.

Website Resources:

Speaking in Tongues' website:

<http://www.speakingintonguesfilm.info/>

Related articles, books & films:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/resources-links/>

Summary of the issues and links to learn more: <http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/about-the-issue/>

Recent news on the issue from around the world:

<http://www.facebook.com/Speaking.in.Tongues.film?ref=ts>

Glossary of language education terms:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/glossary/>

Related organizations:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/organizations/>

Speaking in Tongues' blog:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/our-blog/>

Myths & Realities about multilingualism:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/myths-realities/>

Additional information about the film *Speaking in Tongues*:

<http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/the-film/press/>

Press about the film:

“Tongues” cracks the language barrier

By Michael Fox

<http://www.sf360.org/features/in-production-tongues-cracks-the-language-barrier>

Mission Featured in S.F. Film Festival

By Amanda Martinez, 22 April 2009 <http://missionlocal.org/2009/04/mission-district-featured-in-san-francisco-international-film-festival/>

Press about the Issue:

Where Education and Assimilation Collide, By Ginger Thompson, March 15, 2009:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/15/us/15immig.html?_r=2&pagewanted=print

Multilingual Chicago Speaks, By Janet Nolan and Maria Vargas April 15, 2009:

http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/opinion/letters/chi-090415nolanvargas_briefs,0,5974645,print.story

Bilingual Kids Not Slowed by Second Tongue

ABC Science Online, 7 November 2002

<http://www.abc.net.au/science/news/stories/s720173.htm>

For more background articles, visit the Resources section of the *Speaking in Tongues* website: <http://speakingintonguesfilm.info/learn-more/resources-links/> or the film's Facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/Speaking.in.Tongues.film?ref=ts>

The producers thank Maxine Einhorn for her generosity and invaluable work putting this guide together. Maxine is a credentialed teacher who taught at colleges in London, UK, for more than twenty years with a focus on film studies and media literacy at the undergraduate and college level. Maxine has an M.A. in Film and TV from the University of London (UK) and has worked as a researcher on independent film productions. She currently works with educators using public media to enrich teaching and learning at KQED's Education Network.

This guide is based on the 2009 Schools at the Festival Study Guide for *Speaking in Tongues* compiled by Julia Queck for the Education Program of the San Francisco Film Society when *Speaking in Tongues* premiered.

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