



COOL TOOLS + INTERVIEWS + TRENDS

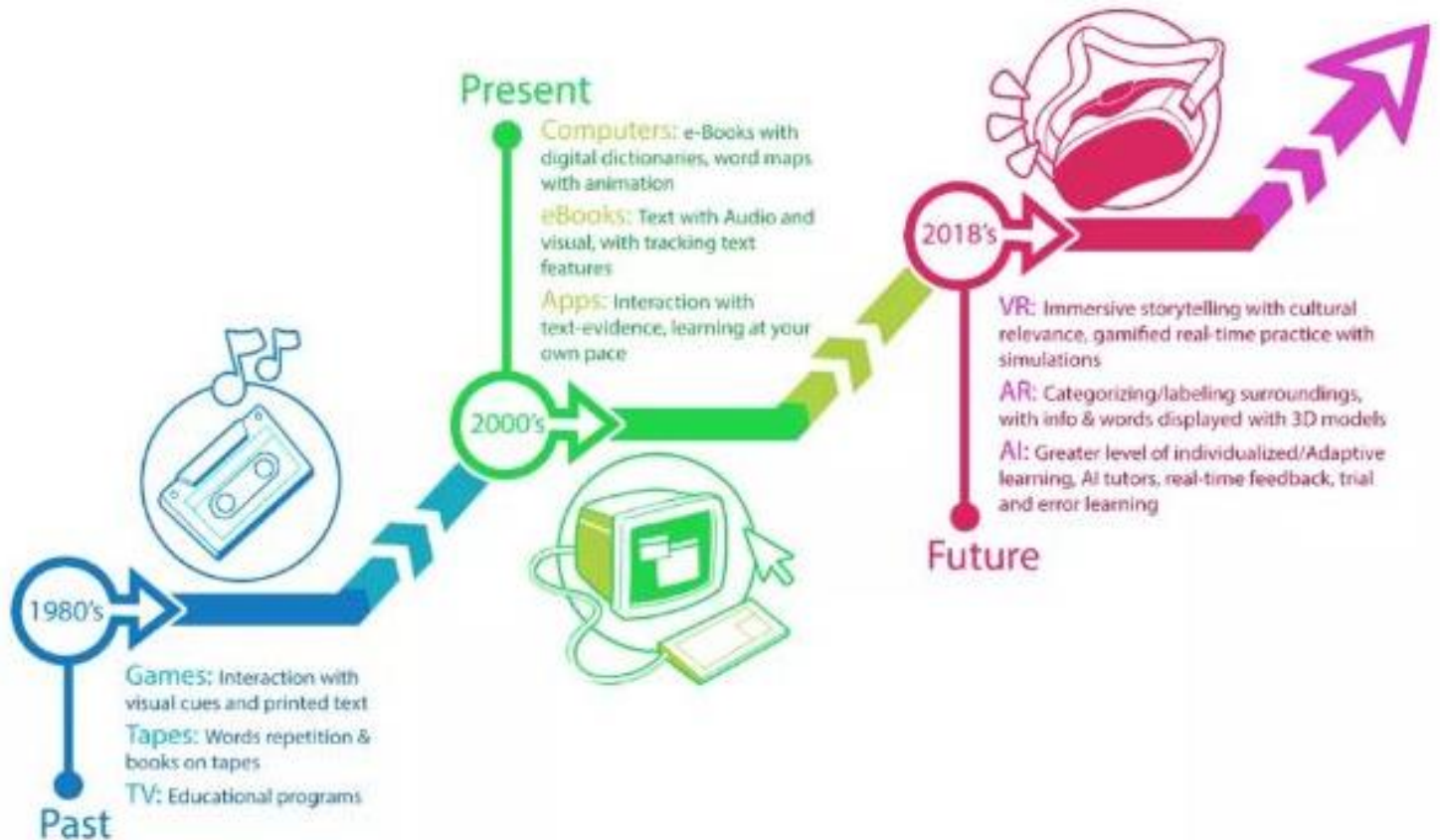
TRENDS

# Bilingual Literacy + Digital Literacy = The Future of Education

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*What will bilingual literacy instruction look like in 2030?*

GUEST COLUMN | by Liliana Suero



**I**magine walking into a bilingual classroom where a small group of students is working on acquiring new vocabulary words using an augmented reality app.

The software displays words and plays audio and animated visual cues alongside classroom objects.



Then those words are added to digital dictionaries and stored on digital voice assistants or tablets to be used within the context of a story.

Another group is being taught a mini-lesson on reading comprehension. Students use virtual reality to embark on a field trip to an exciting destination in the past or present.

In another room, students are immersed in the classic novel *Don Quixote*, where they become a part of the story itself, altering the outcomes of the story by modifying dialogue lines and the course of action.

This is my vision for a bilingual classroom in 2030, which is a huge leap from two decades ago.

### My Bilingual Literacy Experiences

In my 22 years of experience as an elementary school bilingual teacher and instructional coach, I have seen the evolution of best practices in literacy and the amazing impact it has had on bilingual classrooms.



The advent of digital resources in classrooms has changed the way we learn a second language: from using a rigid form to a more fluid and flexible blended-learning approach. We went from using cassette tapes during the 1960s through the 1980s to watching educational TV shows in order to learn a second language.

In the late '90s and early 2000s, we became immersed in the World Wide Web. Computers became part of the typical classroom setting to deliver bilingual instruction. Hard copy classroom textbooks evolved into e-books, bringing concepts to life by providing context.

Soon after, an ever-growing world of educational apps and games became available. The implementation of best practices such as interaction, visual cues, and modeling allowed students to learn at their own pace thanks to the adaptive nature of these features.

### What I Know About Bilingual Best Practices

According to research, there are two main factors that influence reading development regardless of students' socioeconomic background or individual impairments:

- vocabulary development and
- reading comprehension through exposure to various text structures and organization.

Throughout my years as a bilingual teacher, I have witnessed that vocabulary instruction is effective when it is taught intentionally and with explicit word meaning. One of the methods that enable this process is combining the Frayer model with exercises that provide context, using images as well as student-friendly definitions along with cognates.

Research states that if bilingual students develop academic vocabulary in their primary language, they are capable of transferring those skills to a second language (Méndez et al. 2015).



Once students acquire vocabulary knowledge, they start to apply it metacognitively when reading a variety of texts for reading comprehension.

Comprehension strategies are taught in order to construct meaning.

These strategies include visualizing, predicting, inferring, and comparing and contrasting information from different sources. Students learn to connect main ideas, arguments, and authors' perspectives by using their knowledge of the text structure.

For bilingual students to become successful readers, they must be exposed in a meaningful and engaging way to a variety of reading selections that reflect the different text structures that exist in both fiction and nonfiction.

Students need access to a variety of reading selections, both narrative and expository, in order to have a successful reading experience (Zemelman et al. 2005).

Without question, technology can be used to expand bilingual students' literacy skills and knowledge.

### Evolution of the Learning Environment

Literacy as we know it is already evolving.

Twenty years ago, the use of technology in most classrooms was minimal or nonexistent.

Now we can barely keep up with all the new apps and software available for literacy instruction.

There are many new technologies that allow student choice and interaction, not to mention the astounding audio and vivid visuals they provide.

Flipped classrooms are being implemented in many districts, enabling bilingual teachers to move learning beyond the classroom using digital media.

**In my opinion, *bilingual literacy plus digital literacy—is the future.***

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*Survey Question for you: What is your favorite technology to use in teaching bilingual education?*

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### References

Méndez, Lucía I., et al. "A Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Vocabulary Approach for Young Latino Dual Language Learners." *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, vol. 58, no. 1, Feb. 2015, pp. 93–106., doi:10.1044/2014\_jslhr-l-12-0221.

Zemelman, Steven, et al. *Best Practice: Today's Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools*. 2005, Heinemann.

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*Liliana Suero was born and raised in the Dominican Republic where she started her passion for learning and education. Once she arrived in the United States, she learned her second and third language while graduating in college with a Bachelor of Arts in computer science. She then moved on to be an experienced and energetic bilingual educator for 21 years. Currently, Liliana works at Istation, an education technology company, as the Spanish Curriculum Development Manager.*