Day 30

READING PASSAGE 3

*You should spend about 20 minutes on **Questions 27–40**, which are based on Reading Passage 3 below.*

The Significant Role of Mother Tongue in Education

One consequence of population mobility is an increasing diversity within schools. To illustrate, in the city of Toronto in Canada, 58% of kindergarten pupils come from homes where English is not the usual language of communication. Schools in Europe and North America have experienced this diversity for years, and educational policies and practices vary widely between countries and even within countries. Some political parties and groups search for ways to solve the problem of diverse communities and their integration in schools and society. However, they see few positive consequences for the host society and worry that this diversity threatens the identity of the host society. Consequently, they promote unfortunate educational policies that will make the "problem" disappear. If students retain their culture and language, they are viewed as less capable of identifying with the mainstream culture and learning the mainstream language of the society.

The challenge for educators and policy-makers is to shape the evolution of national identity in such a way that the rights of all citizens (including school children) are respected, and the cultural, linguistic, and economic resources of the nation are maximised. To waste the resources of the nation by discouraging children from developing their mother tongues is quite simply unintelligent from the point of view of national self-interest. A first step in providing an appropriate education for culturally and linguistically diverse children is to examine what the existing research says about the role of children's mother tongues in their educational development.

In fact, the research is very clear. When children continue to develop their abilities in two or more languages throughout their primary school, they gain a deeper understanding of language and how to use it effectively. They have more practice in processing language, especially when they develop literacy in both. More than 150 research studies conducted during the past 35 years strongly support what Goethe, the famous eighteenth-century German philosopher, once said: the person who knows only one language does not truly know that language. Research suggests that bilingual children may also develop more flexibility in their thinking as a result of processing information through two different languages.

The level of development of children's mother tongue is a strong predictor of their second language development. Children who come to school with a solid foundation in their mother tongue develop stronger literacy abilities in the school language. When parents and other caregivers (e.g. grandparents) are able to spend time with their children and tell stories or discuss issues with them in a way that develops their mother

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tongue, children come to school well-prepared to learn the school language and succeed educationally. Children's knowledge and skills transfer across language from the mother tongue to the school language. Transfer across language can be two-way: both languages nurture each other when the educational environment permits children access to both languages.

Some educators and parents are suspicious of mother tongue-based teaching programs because they worry that they take time away from the majority language. For example, in a bilingual program where 50% of the time is spent teaching through children's home language and 50% through the majority language, surely children won't progress as far in the latter? One of the most strongly established findings of educational research, however, is that well-implemented bilingual programs can promote literacy and subject-matter knowledge in a minority language without any negative effects on children's development in the majority language. Within Europe, the Foyer program in Belgium, which develops children's speaking and literacy abilities in three languages (their mother tongue, Dutch and French), most clearly illustrates the benefits of bilingual and trilingual education (see Cummins, 2000).

It is easy to understand how this happens. When children are learning through a minority language, they are learning concepts and intellectual skills too. Pupils who know how to tell the time in their mother tongue understand the concept of telling time. In order to tell time in the majority language, they do not need to re-learn the concept. Similarly, at more advanced stages, there is transfer across languages in other skills such as knowing how to distinguish the main idea from the supporting details of a written passage or story, and distinguishing fact from opinion. Studies of secondary school pupils are providing interesting findings in this area, and it would be worth extending this research.

Many people marvel at how quickly bilingual children seem to "pick up" conversational skills in the majority language at school (although it takes much longer for them to catch up with native speakers in academic language skills). However, educators are oftenmuch less aware of how quickly children can lose their ability to use their mother tongue, even in the home context. The extent and rapidity of language loss will vary according to the concentration of families from a particular linguistic group in the neighbourhood. Where the mother tongue is used extensively in the community, then language loss among children will be less. However, where language communities are not concentrated in particular neighbourhoods, children can lose their ability to communicate in their mother tongue within 2-3 years of starting school. They may retain receptive skills in the language but they will use the majority language in speaking with their peers and siblings and in responding to their parents. By the time children become adolescents, the linguistic division between parents and children has become an emotional chasm. Pupils frequently become alienated from the cultures of both home and school with predictable results.

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Questions 27–30

*Choose the correct letter, **A**, **B**, **C** or **D**.*

Write the correct letter in boxes 27–30 on your answer sheet.

27 What point did the writer make in the second paragraph?

A Some present studies on children's mother tongues are misleading.
B A culturally rich education programme benefits some children more than others.
C Bilingual children can make a valuable contribution to the wealth of a country.
D The law on mother tongue use at school should be strengthened.

28 Why does the writer refer to something that Goethe said?

A to lend weight to his argument
B to contradict some research
C to introduce a new concept
D to update current thinking

29 The writer believes that when young children have a firm grasp of their mother tongue

A they can teach older family members what they learnt at school.
B they go on to do much better throughout their time at school.
C they can read stories about their cultural background.
D they develop stronger relationships with their family than with their peers.

30 Why are some people suspicious about mother tongue-based teaching programmes?

A They worry that children will be slow to learn to read in either language.
B They think that children will confuse words in two languages.
C They believe that the programmes will make children less interested in their lessons.
D They fear that the programmes will use up valuable time in the school day.

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Questions 31–35

*Complete the summary using the list of words, **A–J**, below.*

*Write the correct letter, **A–J**, in boxes 31–35 on your answer sheet.*

Bilingual Children

It was often recorded that bilingual children acquire the **31** ..... to converse in the majority language remarkable quickly. The fact that the mother tongue can disappear at a similar **32** ..... is less well understood. This phenomenon depends, to a certain extent, on the proposition of people with the same linguistic background that have settled in a particular **33** ..... . If this is limited, children are likely to lose the active use of their mother tongue. And thus no longer employ it even with **34** ....., although they may still understand it. It follows that teenager children in these circumstances experience a sense of **35** ..... in relation to all aspects of their lives.

A teachers	**B** school	**C** dislocation
D rate	**E** time	**F** family
G communication	**H** type	**I** ability
J area		

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Questions 36–40

Do the following statements agree with the views of the writer in Reading passage 3?

In boxes 36–40 on your answer sheet, write

YES	*if the statement agrees with the views of the writer*
NO	*if the statement contradicts the views of the writer*
NOT GIVEN	*if it is impossible to say what the writer thinks about this*

36 Less than half of the children who attend kindergarten in Toronto have English as their mother tongue.

37 Research proves that learning the host country language at school can have an adverse effect on a child's mother tongue.

38 The Foyer program is accepted by the French education system.

39 Bilingual children are taught to tell the time earlier than monolingual children.

40 Bilingual children can apply reading comprehension strategies acquired in one language when reading in the other.

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