

AccELLerate!

The quarterly review of the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition

Young English Learners

Welcome to the winter issue of *AccELLerate!* Our theme is young English learners. These children come from linguistically and ethnically diverse backgrounds and are learning a second language while still acquiring their first language. Working with these children in an environment that is empowering and supportive of their home culture and language is essential for their academic success and growth into knowledgeable, skilled, and confident citizens of the 21st century. We offer a collection of papers presenting specific practices and new ideas for both novice and experienced teachers.

August et al. and Erdemir underscore the importance of vocabulary development; Robbins & Chamot and Gonzales describe innovative ways of developing young children's learning strategies using the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA). Two papers address the issue of helping parents and caregivers to prepare their children for school (Connor & Brown; Grassi & Barker). McWilliams, Maldonado, & Szczepaniak share their experiences with developing family-school-community partnerships and Ballantyne discusses the need to foster DLLs' social and emotional development in a new language. McCrary, Sennette, & Brown describe a journey to build a preparation program for pre-service teachers. Finally, Peña, Bedore, & Gibson and Rivas & Ware tackle the challenges of appropriate assessment of young ELs' language skills and knowledge.

Happy New Year from NCELA!



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Developing Oral Proficiency in Dual Language Learners— The Vocabulary Improvement and Oral Language Enrichment and Literacy through Stories (VIOLETS) Program

Diane August, Lauren Artzi, Erin F. Haynes, and Louise Corwin

For many DLLs, English oral language skills are an area of particular weakness [1; 2]. DLLs who have been in U.S. schools since prekindergarten develop oral language skills at faster rates than their native-English-speaking peers, but this rate seems to diminish as they become older so that they do not catch up. By the time they reach the middle grades, DLLs are, on average, two standard deviations below native speakers in English vocabulary knowledge [3].

Despite the evidence that most DLLs lag in English oral proficiency and emergent literacy development, the research base is lacking data regarding effective ways to address the gap between DLLs and their more English-proficient classmates [4; 5]. However, available findings indicate that effective programs for native-English-speaking children can be adjusted to meet the needs of DLLs [6]. To develop oral proficiency, these programs immerse children in lexically dense, engaging, and rich oral language environments and teach individual words explicitly [7; 8].

Building on this research, we have introduced a promising approach—VIOLETS—for developing oral language proficiency, emergent literacy skills, and conceptual knowledge in prekindergarten DLLs. A small case study of 61 randomly selected 4-year-old pre-K students, stratified according to language background, indicates that VIOLETS is a promising method for developing vocabulary in both DLLs and their low-income English-speaking classmates. This article briefly describes the program.

Overview of VIOLETS

The VIOLETS program consists of both curriculum and PD. The curriculum uses as a starting point 12 Big Books, chosen on the basis of their quality, their appeal to young children, and the extent to which their content aligns with state¹ content standards. In the VIOLETS approach, carefully selected vocabulary words and idiomatic expressions that occur in the stories are taught before, during, and after shared reading. During shared reading, paraphrasing and questioning techniques further develop students' oral language proficiency and conceptual knowledge. Additional components of the program include the presentation of 'core knowledge' themes that tie the Big Books to state standards and emergent literacy, including concepts of print.

VIOLETS can be incorporated easily into ongoing early childhood programs because of its familiar format, manageable length, and flexibility. The read-aloud and center formats already are used extensively in pre-K settings. The time needed to implement each VIOLETS lesson is approximately 30 minutes. VIOLETS can be implemented in English-only programs or as an ESL component of a bilingual program.

PD is also a crucial component of the program. Though space does not allow for a full description here, the PD consists of initial training and ongoing mentoring, with a goal of ensuring that teachers master the content they will be teaching and interact with students in ways that promote language and learning.

Editor's Notes

The following signs and abbreviations are used in this issue.



— *Success stories* describe promising projects or ideas



— *Teachers' gems of wisdom* share effective instructional practices



— *Information pieces*

DLL—Dual language learner

EL—English learner

ESEA—Elementary and Secondary Education Act

L1—first or native language

L2—second language, typically refers to English

PD—Professional development

Citations in the text are in [bracketed numbers]; the references follow each article in the same numerical order. Other notes are indicated by consecutively numbered superscripts.

The next section of this article focuses on two important components of the program—ESL-enhanced shared reading and vocabulary instruction.

ESL-Enhanced Shared Reading

One Big Book is used in each five-day unit, with small sections of the book read aloud each day. Teachers are given detailed teacher guides to help them implement the shared reading techniques.

In VIOLETS, shared reading expands on traditional methods (i.e., reading a book to a group of children and asking them questions about the story or pictures) through the inclusion of scaffolding techniques that maximize DLL's comprehension of the stories [9].

These techniques have been shown to be effective in developing DLLs' oral language proficiency and emergent literacy skills. Additional enhancements for DLLs include a focus on explicit vocabulary instruction in the context of shared reading (see next section), and presenting the books interactively first to make content comprehensible to DLLs and then, through uninterrupted read-throughs, for enjoyment (rather than in the reverse order, which is the current practice). These ESL scaffolding techniques include the following:

- *Previewing* material prior to questioning students;
- Exploiting information in *pictures* to help convey meaning;
- Incorporating *gestures, body language, and dramatization* to demonstrate meaning and enhance retention of words and content;
- Using *choral repetition* of selected words and phrases;
- Providing *repeated exposure* to words and concepts;
- Using *additional questioning techniques* that promote oral language development, including techniques that develop students' knowledge of objects, actions, places, time, parts, features, change, causes, classes/subclasses, sequences, and number; and
- Providing a brief *summary* after reading pages that present challenging content.

Figure 1 presents examples of these scaffolding techniques from a teacher guide for *Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes [10]. The teacher uses these techniques after a given passage has been read.

ESL-Enhanced Vocabulary Instruction

In standard vocabulary instruction, teachers generally focus on Tier 2 words (see [11] for a description of

Passage 1:

Look at *Chrysanthemum's* miserable face [point to *Chrysanthemum*]. (*Picture*)

Let's make a face like that. (*Gesture*)

How do we feel? We feel miserable! (*Previewing prior to open-ended questioning, below*)

Let's say that together: We feel miserable! We feel miserable! (*Choral repetition*)

Why does *Chrysanthemum* feel so miserable? [Anticipated response: Because the children keep making fun of her name] (*Oral language and knowledge structure development: causes*)

Passage 2:

Poor *Chrysanthemum* wilted again. Wilted is what a flower does when it needs water.

It droops like this [demonstrate wilting]. (*Dramatization*)

Show me what you would look like if you were wilting. (*Dramatization*)

Let's all say: We are wilting flowers. (*Choral repetition*)

Figure 1. Examples of scaffolding techniques

Tier 2 words). In the VIOLETS program, words selected for vocabulary instruction include Tier 2 words that are used most frequently at the early grade levels and that are important for comprehending the stories. However, because of the project's focus on DLLs, foundational vocabulary also is developed. This vocabulary includes basic words that rarely require instruction for most students, but that often are not known by DLLs, in addition to function words (e.g., *but, so, why, then*). Each week, 4 Tier 2 words, 12 foundational words, and 1 function word are taught.

ESL-enhanced vocabulary instruction uses eight explicit methods. As with the methods used in shared reading, some of these methods are effective for teaching native-English-speaking children, but research indicates that they are particularly effective for teaching vocabulary to DLLs [12]. These methods include the following:

- Contextual methods that provide opportunities to connect words to prior experience or the present school context;
- Analytic methods, in which there is discussion of words in contexts oth-

er than the book and children's experiences;

- Anchored methods, in which there is attention to written and spoken forms of the words;
- Visual aid techniques that use pictures to make word meanings clear;
- Sheltering techniques that involve using child-friendly definitions;
- Kinesthetic techniques that provide opportunities for children to act out word meanings;
- Meaning-based techniques in which teacher and students discuss words in semantic categories; and
- Paraphrasing and questioning techniques that give students additional exposure to the targeted words, deepen their knowledge by linking the words to related concepts introduced in the text, and give them opportunities to talk about the words.

Vocabulary is taught in context, through picture cards (Figure 2), during shared reading, or in center-based activities. The picture cards convey word meanings through appealing, colorful pictures.

For Tier 2 words, the pictures are not direct representations of the target word (since Tier 2 words are not common objects); rather, a scenario is constructed around a picture, providing a context for introducing the word's meaning. Figure 2 illustrates a picture card and an instructional routine for teaching the Tier 2 word "perfect."

Conclusion

The new Common Core State Standards highlight the importance of listening and speaking language skills to success in reading and writing. Given the importance of these skills, it is vital that long-term, sustained efforts begin in preschool and continue throughout the school years. In this brief article we describe one preschool effort we hope will launch young children on the path to competence in these domains.

Note

1. In the present program, the relevant standards are the Pre-K Maryland Model for School Readiness (MMSR) standards and the Maryland Pre-K common core state standards in language arts.

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perfect




The word we are going to learn is *perfect*. Perfect means just right. If something is perfect, it is as good as it could be. *(Child-friendly definition)*

Let's look at a picture of something perfect. *(Picture)*

This is a perfect day to go to the beach. You can see it is sunny and warm outside.

It's a perfect day. Let's pretend that we are collecting shells on the beach. [Have children pretend to collect shells.] *(Gesture)*

And some of the shells we find are perfect also. They are not broken and very shiny.

Can you name something you think is perfect? Why do you think it is perfect? *(Contextual instruction)*

Is a broken toy perfect? Tell me why or why not? *(Analytic instruction)*

Say "perfect" with me three times – perfect, perfect, perfect.

Point to the letter 'p' in the word 'perfect.' What sound does the word 'perfect' start with? What is the letter name? *(Anchored instruction)*

As we read, I want you to listen for the word 'perfect.' If you hear it, touch your nose! *(Contextual instruction)*

Figure 2. An example of a picture card



askNCELA's Inbox

In which we highlight the answers to commonly asked questions that appear in our e-mail inbox.

How many young ELs are there?

There is no exact nationwide count of pre-K EL children, but the number of ELs enrolled in programs is rising. For example, Head Start reports that in 2001, 25% of children were ELs and in 2009 the number grew by 5%, reaching 315,987 children. The number of K-2 ELs was 1, 947,401 in 2006-07.

For more information, see NCELA's Short Turnaround Report "Key Demographics & Practice Recommendations for Young English Learners" (2011) at: <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/files/uploads/9/EarlyChildhoodShortReport.pdf>.

Facilitating Vocabulary Learning of EL and Bilingual Children in Preschool and Kindergarten Classrooms: Practical Recommendations

Ersoy Erdemir

Overview

Robust vocabulary knowledge and a rich word repertoire are two critical language components that monolingual and bilingual children need to develop in early childhood in order to attain solid literacy competency in school. However, it has been emphasized in research that young EL students from language-minority backgrounds lag behind their native-monolingual counterparts in vocabulary knowledge [1; 2]. In this regard, an important consideration is how classroom teachers can facilitate and enhance the vocabulary-learning experiences of ELs. This article focuses on (1) underlining the importance and critical role of building robust vocabulary knowledge for EL preschoolers and kindergartners, and (2) providing research-based practical recommendations for preschool and kindergarten teachers to help them support the vocabulary learning of EL students.

Importance of Early Vocabulary Knowledge in the Second Language

A rich vocabulary repertoire in early childhood is a major building block for the language and literacy development of bilingual and EL children, as vocabulary plays a pivotal and

predictive role in their reading comprehension and overall academic achievement at elementary grades [3]. Vocabulary knowledge establishes the essential foundation for children to learn how to decode and comprehend a text and prepares them for school [4].

In the areas of reading and language arts, vocabulary knowledge shapes the performance of comprehension and written expression, whereas in content areas, including mathematics, science, and social studies, it is central to the development of new conceptual frameworks and the understanding of increasingly sophisticated ideas. Therefore, early vocabulary knowledge closely ties to knowledge acquisition and academic performance at school.

The process of learning new vocabulary and building a repertoire of L2 words can be a challenging task for young ELs, especially immigrants [5], who may not have developed adequate proficiency in oral English and may have little or no experience with print materials in English. Many ELs arrive at school with insufficient English vocabulary to support their L2 learning, in particular, word-reading

and word-meaning development. This, in turn, disrupts literacy attainment and accounts for the discrepancies between ELs' academic achievement and that of their monolingual peers in elementary grades [6]. To address some of these issues at the classroom level, teachers can implement research-based vocabulary practices and make use of strategies that foster the vocabulary development of EL and/or bilingual students in preschool or kindergarten.

Practical Recommendations for Teachers

Provide direct vocabulary instruction
Incidental vocabulary acquisition through exposure can take some time for young ELs, given that they are less able to exploit linguistic cues to derive the complete meaning of familiar words or to disambiguate the meaning of unfamiliar words [7]. Therefore, direct vocabulary instruction can provide a quicker way for ELs to increase the depth (quality) and breadth (the number of words they know) of their vocabulary knowledge, as long as the instruction is tailored to their current language proficiency and delivered comprehensibly.

Direct vocabulary instruction might include clearly articulating a new word to create a phonological imprint, explaining the word's meanings, indicating the most used meaning of the word, using the word in a sentence or in a short informational script, extending the word's meaning to other contexts, asking questions to check for comprehension, and, in the end, going back and walking through the same process to reinforce pronunciation, meaning, and the use of the word. It can also involve different questioning techniques, and be employed through anchored instruction [8].

Multimedia also can offer ELs alternative venues to support their vocabulary development. Teachers might consider implementing interactive vocabulary activities, presenting theme-vocabulary and related concepts through videos, or reviewing and reinforcing vocabulary knowledge with relevant online games.

Support vocabulary instruction

Vocabulary instruction might be more effective if words are demonstrated by using relevant artifacts or objects or by acting out the meaning of the new word. When introducing new vocabulary, the teacher can initiate related games or supply children with supporting materials or displays for hands-on vocabulary learning experiences. In addition, supplemental practices such as pertinent drawing activities, games, and online computer practices can help ELs reinforce the meaning and use of new words.

Conduct storybook read-alouds

Sessions of storybook read-alouds and teacher's embedded vocabulary instruction, as well as questioning techniques within these sessions, can help ELs learn new vocabulary and reinforce their meanings through multiple encounters with new words [9]. Us-

ing technology to add dynamic visuals and sounds to instruction or read-alouds may provide ELs with multiple multimodal means to support their vocabulary development. The quality or diversity of lexical input during read-alouds also can influence the richness and depth of their word repertoire.

Promote peer interactions

EL children also can build their vocabulary from their interactions with monolingual peers [10]. Therefore, teachers should create more opportunities for peer interactions in the classroom by structuring some learning activities as cooperative tasks to be worked on by small, linguistically heterogeneous groups of children.

Conclusion

Through research-based classroom practices and strategies, teachers can help young ELs/bilinguals enhance their vocabulary learning. Of primary importance is that educators perceive children's bilingualism as a significant asset and a unique contribution to their cultural, linguistic, and academic development rather than viewing it as detrimental to their academic attainment in the language of instruction. Thus, teachers should recognize and empower these students by including linguistic and cultural resources in the curriculum to enhance their early language learning experiences.

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Young EL Learning Strategies: From Abstract Concepts to Concrete Tools

Jill Robbins and Anna Uhl Chamot

Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions that students use to complete learning tasks. The Metacognitive Model of Strategic Learning proposes that learners who are fully conscious of their learning strategies are more likely to develop control over the learning process and become effective learners [1]. The frequent application of learning strategies to the task of language learning is associated with higher levels of self-efficacy [2], which plays a critical part in self-regulated learning and contributes to the student's motivation to persevere in language learning. The concept of self-regulation is related to Attribution Theory [3], which proposes that the learner's belief that success in academic work is the result of internal, unstable, and controllable factors leads to their achievement. Thus it is optimal that learners attribute their success or lack of it to their own efforts instead of to luck or aptitude.

The challenge for teachers of young learners is to take the abstract concepts of learning strategies and turn them into classroom activities. One way this can be done is through the use of a narrative that compares the learning process to a challenge and brings in metacognitive strategies as keys to achieving goals. Another method is the use of animal mascots to represent particular strategies, with each mascot accompanied by a brief narrative and given a name according to the strategy it represents. Both of these methods will be described below.

The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) model

The CALLA model [4] provides a structure for the instruction of learning strategies and a taxonomy of content and language learning strategies. These strategies are organized into two groups, metacognitive strategies and task-based strategies [5]. Strategies in-

struction usually begins with the metacognitive strategies because they form the basis for the application of other strategies, and, when used alone, can support noticeable gains in achievement. Teachers should keep in mind that when teaching learning strategies to young learners, the instruction should be:

- explicit,
- embedded in a learning task,
- appropriate to the age of the child, and
- fun!

The Use of Narratives to Teach Learning Strategies

The instructional sequence designed for CALLA provides a five-stage cycle for introducing, teaching, practicing, evaluating, and applying content, language, and learning strategies. The cycle repeats as new content, language, and strategies are introduced [6]. This article deals with the first two stages of the cycle, Preparation and Presentation, because they are the points in instruction at which strategies are introduced.

Preparation: Find out what strategies students already are using. In discussions with students, present a challenge and ask how they would solve it. Point out that the actions they take are learning *strategies* that can be applied to similar tasks. A teacher of young ELs may ask her class, "When you are speaking English, and you can't say the word you want to, what do you do?" and write student responses on the board. She would then point out that these are *strategies*, and explain new strategies that will help them.

Presentation: This stage involves explaining the task to be done and modeling the application of learning strategies. Choose a strategy to teach that's appropriate to the students' age and explicitly teach it. Explicit instruction in learning

strategies requires that the teacher name the strategy and explain how and when to use it, and why it helps.

To present the metacognitive model in narrative form, a teacher of young ELs might display a picture of a parrot. The narrative begins, "This is Lily, an African Grey Parrot. She wanted to learn to talk with people. Here's her story."¹ Lily planned when she decided to learn to talk, monitored when she listened to herself, problem-solved when she changed the way she formed the word, and evaluated when she found how happy it made her when she could speak.

The teacher concludes the narrative by telling the class: "You can be like Lily today and **make a plan** to learn new words in English. Let's make a list of some words we'll be using in this week's lessons . . ."

Animal and Toy Strategy Mascots

Stuffed animals and toys used to represent strategies help to make abstract ideas concrete. For example, *Take Notes Tiger*, *Planning Panda* (Figure 1), and *Cooperating Cow* give the teacher something to point to in the classroom that symbolizes the students' mental



Figure 1. Planning Panda



Figure 2. Diann Garnett with Monitoring Monkey

processes as they learn. Stuffed animals also can reduce anxiety about language learning and provide a tactile focus for students who need that kind of stimulation. Teachers name the strategy used by the animal and then can refer to the strategy quickly by showing students the animal or referring to it during class work. See also *Monitoring Monkey* (Figures 2 and 3) (the grand-daddy of the animal mascots)² in book and video form on the CALLA website [7].

It is important to develop narratives in which the central character does not rely on luck or magic—the character's efforts should be the source of change. In giving students a task to accomplish using a new strategy, make sure that it is challenging enough to require some extra effort, but not so challenging that the students will meet with failure. Structure their practice of learning strategies in a way that allows them to monitor their success and self-evaluate the effects of their strategy use.

Conclusion

The use of narrative and animal mascots to teach metacognitive strategies can help young ELs learn essential academic content and language and prepare them to be independent and self-regulated learners in school.



Figure 3. Monitoring Monkey on a chair

Notes

1. The full text of the narrative is available at <http://calla.ws/narratives.html>
2. Monitoring Monkey was developed by kindergarten teachers Diann Garnett and Jason Sizemore in Allentown, PA.

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Using CALLA to Support Preschool English Learners

Leah González

Research shows that when teachers incorporate effective instructional frameworks for EL students in the early years, their students develop skills critical to later academic success [1]. One such framework is the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), which has three main components: (1) content-based instruction, (2) explicit instruction of academic language and literacy skills, and (3) explicit instruction of learning strategies [2].

AppleTree Early Learning Public Charter School (AppleTree) partners with AppleTree Institute, a federal Investing in Innovation (i3) grantee, to implement the *Every Child Ready* (ECR) curriculum. ECR provides high-quality instruction to all students, and uses the CALLA framework as the instructional base for supporting ELL and at-risk students. AppleTree enrolls 620 preschool and pre-k students across seven campuses in Washington, DC. Roughly 8% of these students are identified as ELs.

AppleTree classrooms use a content-based curriculum, the foundation of the CALLA framework. The knowledge ELs have acquired in their home language becomes the context for new concepts. Within each content area, students are taught appropriate functional language that they are likely to use in future academic endeavors.

Teachers incorporate academic language into all lessons. Language objectives are integrated throughout the day to target content-specific language needs. In a science small-group lesson, for example, students create a *hypothesis*, conduct an *experiment*, and *assess* their hypothesis. Teachers provide opportunities to use new vocabulary in numerous settings, increasing depth and breadth of vocabulary acquisition. For EL students, CALLA's focus on academic language is especially important, as they tend to acquire social language far earlier than they acquire academic language [3].

One of the most unique aspects of the CALLA framework is the focus on explicitly teaching children learning strategies. At AppleTree, this is accomplished through intentional scaffolding, in which students are taught learning strategies such as visualization, work evaluation, collaboration, and effective communication. Teachers cycle strategies through different lessons and provide students with opportunities to practice the strategies in varied contexts. Over two AppleTree program years, the strategies become familiar habits. Eventually, students may say, "I know what I need to learn, how I'm going to learn it, and how I'll know if I've 'made it' or how far I have to go to get there" [4].

The advantages of using the CALLA instructional framework are not restricted to EL students alone. By using CALLA as AppleTree's instructional base, *all* students are provided with the skills necessary to be successful in school. CALLA not only promotes advanced language skills and concepts, but provides students with the tools necessary to become successful learners through the explicit instruction of learning strategies.

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Supporting Parents to Prepare Young Dual Language Learners for School

Christiane Connors and Janet Brown

Parents are their children's first and life-long teachers, and for DLLs, who acquire English and their home language simultaneously, they play a critical role in dual language learning and literacy. Parents and caregivers who understand how children learn and become literate [1; 2] are equipped to ease their children's transition into school and beyond. This article explores the research-based principles of effective literacy programs and highlights how these principles inform the efforts of one program for parents and caregivers of DLLs.

Developing a Framework for Emergent Literacy Support

Emergent literacy programs that prepare parents of DLLs to develop their child's literacy incorporate four critical elements. First, they begin with purposeful, well-conceptualized, and well-implemented activities that provide families with meaningful and applicable experiences [3]. Even modest literacy-promoting interventions, such as increasing the frequency of parent-child book-sharing activities, can enhance DLLs' literacy significantly [1].

Second, effective programs develop discrete skills and build awareness through culturally-relevant opportunities and contexts [1]. "Learning to become literate is not 'just' a matter of acquiring certain skills but is also about participating in cultural practices of the home and community" [4, p.184]. Parents, caregivers, and siblings can be excellent resources by sharing native language songs, stories, skills, and cultural artifacts [5]. Successful programs host parent workshops that impart the importance of reading to children and provide parents with audio books or other materials that support the continuation of literacy development at home.

Third, effective programs create rich oral language environments that immerse

parents and caregivers in English and their first language [3]. A feasibility study on the development and implementation of a bilingual family literacy program noted the importance of bilingual instructional staff who could communicate, interpret, translate, and scribe words in both languages for children and parents [4]. By valuing the parents' native language and appreciating the role of literacy in cultural practices, emergent literacy programs can help parents and caregivers expand their own literacy skills and model these skills to their children.

Finally, successful programs use measurements other than the acquisition of discrete literacy skills [1]. Programs can measure, for instance, the effectiveness of a shared book reading program or collect ongoing data from program participants to get a comprehensive understanding of the program's effectiveness, strengths, and areas in need of improvement.

Practices Family Literacy Programs Can Adapt

Parenting Towards Literacy (PTL)¹ is a program that provides opportunities for parents of preschool-age DLLs to develop skills they can use to nurture their children's literacy growth. The PTL curriculum is offered to a mostly Spanish-speaking group, most members of which have been interrupted in their formal education and live at or below the poverty line. Instructional strategies incorporated in the PTL curriculum include modeling, discussions, videos, and interactive activities. The PTL program illustrates all four of the principles discussed above.

Principle 1. Choose purposeful activities
PTL consists of eight sequential sessions that meet once a week. Although sessions are designed to run for 2.5 hours, each session has a flexible design so it

can be shortened or adapted to stand alone. The first two sessions create a context for literacy and focus on trust and nonverbal communication skills; they lay a foundation for sessions 3 and 4 on phonological awareness. Session 5 introduces alphabet knowledge and print awareness to prepare participants to use books as fun and interactive tools. Sessions 6, 7, and 8 continue building participants' literacy knowledge and skill in incorporating literacy activities into their parent-child routines. Every interactive session includes time for parent reflection in a group to assess the success and effectiveness of the activity.

Principle 2. Build awareness through culturally relevant opportunities.

PTL encourages parents to be active, engaged, and critical learners, and to evaluate whether activities resonate with their cultural values and parenting style. PTL incorporates Parent-Child Interactive Literacy Activities (PILA), skills-based activities that parents can use to create supportive and fun learning environments that are culturally relevant. After practicing PILA skills and activities, parents consider what fit well, and what would be appropriate given their home environments, culture, and lifestyles. Through individual, partner, and group activities, participants build awareness of themselves as learners, communicators, and teachers. For example, parents participate in their children's classrooms on occasion to practice the skills they are developing—reading, writing, or engaging in center-based dramatic play and other activities.

Principle 3. Create rich oral language environments

PTL acknowledges the strong correlation between comprehensive early oral language skills and later reading development [2]. The curriculum engages families in building oral literacy through storytelling, dramatization, and

language-rich family outings such as trips to a museum. In addition, PTL instruction, materials, and facilitators' notes are delivered and/or prepared in both English and Spanish to support parents in making informed decisions about their child's learning. Sessions also employ culturally specific activities like *trabalengua*, or tongue twisters, songs, and poetry in the first language that parents can share with their children.

Principle 4. Evaluate participants' acquisition of discrete literacy skills

Parents who come to the eight-week PTL program recognize that language and literacy fosters school readiness and that they can help their child prepare for school. Pre- and post-data collected in 2011 also measure several areas of literacy development, including the number of books in the home, frequency of parents reading to their children, and frequency of children reading on their own. After participating in the PTL program in 2010-2011, parents were more than three times as likely to look at books borrowed from their children's school and nearly twice as likely to

go to the library and attend special events at their children's school.

Conclusion

As early learning programs work to promote young children's literacy development, they can greatly extend their influence by providing support for parents of young DLLs transitioning to school. While there are many ways to provide families of DLLs with early literacy support, approaches that include opportunities for parents to share their perspectives and practice language and literacy activities show promise.

Notes

1. The program *Parenting Towards Literacy* was developed by the Jane Addams Hull House Uptown Head Start/Even Start in Chicago. More information is available at <http://www.hullhouse.org/programsandcenters/program/earlyandfamilyliteracy.html>

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Involving Parents of Young Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Exceptional Students

Elizabeth Grassi and Heidi B. Barker

Creating trusting relationships is the first and most critical step when working with families of young culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) exceptional students. Some families have a long history of trust issues with schools in the United States and, to compound these trust issues, schools tend to make fewer contacts with culturally and linguistically diverse families than with middle- to upper-class white families [1; 2]. In our experience, frequent meetings (both informal and formal) with parents help establish a trusting relationship. This article demonstrates how teachers can build positive, meaningful, and productive relationships with

parents as their young children begin formal school experiences.¹

Informal Meetings

Contacting parents of young children frequently to share successes, not just concerns, shows that educators care about the student [2]. Because the teacher is in a position of power, we believe it is up to the teacher to initiate the relationship with parents. A good place to start is through informal contact such as quick check-ins or small talk. Positive phone conversations, during which teachers report on the child's progress, are also helpful [3].

Home Visits

Home visits are an excellent way to get to know CLD families [3]. For most families, it is an honor to have a teacher visit and these visits can provide insight into the family's culture, the family dynamics, the living situation, and references to aspects of home life that the child has made at school. Home visits can help deepen trusting relationships because they demonstrate the teacher's willingness to get to know the family and their culture, and give the teacher an opportunity to show the parents respect and acknowledge their importance to the young student's success.

Formal Meetings

Once relationships are established with families of young CLDE students through informal means, the families become more comfortable attending formal meetings. The following list offers ways to make meetings more productive, increase attendance, and create a comfortable environment.

- Make information about meetings available in the families' home language.
- Identify or hire interpreters who are fluent in the language *and* the culture of the families.
- Have a nice spread of food available.
- Make the meeting family friendly (everyone welcome, including the young children).
- Professionalism must be reflected in behavior, attitude, dress, and actions.
- Address parents by their formal title (Mr. and Mrs.) and introduce yourself using your formal title.
- Before the meeting begins, leave time for social exchange.
- Discuss issues pertaining to the education of the child: the curriculum, progress toward learning outcomes, school rules and policies, and social expectations.
- If your conferences involve more than one family, leave time at the end for families to get to know each other.

IEP meetings

When initiating an IEP (Individual Educational Program), it is important to note that cultural perceptions of disability and reactions to disability may differ from the school's and the teacher's view. In U.S. school culture, the special education system is defined as a "deficit system." Schools and professionals should move away from a deficit model for CLD families and move toward a model of empowerment [2; 4]. We have found that looking at family strengths and finding ways to involve families in the decision-making

process provides an avenue for collaboration. A cultural liaison can be a tremendous support by providing insights regarding the family's perception of disability, how best to approach the family about the disability, and how best to involve the family in the process. The liaison can help establish a conversation, in a culturally appropriate manner, about the need to build on the child's strengths to support his/her needs.

The goals that are negotiated on the IEP can differ from the desired goals of the family. For example, an IEP goal of "independence" usually stems from a middle-class European-American perspective in which schools work to transition the child with special needs to a more independent lifestyle. When working with CLD families, however, a goal of "independence from the family" may not be relevant. We have found that many CLD families are extended families, and children are expected to live with parents until, or even after, marriage. Often, an extended family will join to care for a child with special needs and independence from the family is not appropriate. In such cases, couching the concept of "independence" in terms of "academic readiness" or "social readiness for school," might be a better fit with the cultural norms of CLD families.

Finding the time to become involved in the school and the special education process can also be difficult for families of CLDE students. Families may not know when it is appropriate to ask questions or how to negotiate meeting times and places that work for the parents' schedules, and may not understand that the process is meant to be collaborative. School personnel must take the initiative to guide the parents through the process. Teachers and other professionals can look for meeting times "outside the box." If meeting within school hours does not work, what are the alternatives? Can the

teacher come to the family's house? Can the teacher meet at times other than during school hours? Can childcare be provided so that both parents (or the single parent) can attend? It is important to research the schedule that works best for the families and try to accommodate this so that families can be involved.

CLD families want to be involved in the decision-making process for their children and for their school—but often they are not given access to involvement in a meaningful way. [2] School personnel must provide the opportunity for true involvement in the full spirit of the mandates put forward in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

Note

1. This article is adapted from Grassi, E. & Barker, H.B. (2010). *Culturally and linguistically diverse exceptional students: Strategies for teaching and assessment*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

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The More We Get Together: Social Development in a New Language

Keira Gebbie Ballantyne

One of the challenges for children who begin learning English at the onset of preschool is negotiating social interactions with peers who speak a different language. Educators must find ways to support these interactions and foster respect for each DLL's home language and culture.

In her book *One Child, Two Languages* [1], Patton Tabors begins with a vignette about a young boy from a Korean-speaking household entering an English-speaking preschool. The child plays alongside English-speaking children, but does not fully engage in their group play. Some of his bids for inclusion in the group are ignored or rebuffed by the other children. Tabors characterizes this child's situation as a "double bind": "In order to learn this new language, [the child] must be socially accepted by those who speak the language; but to be socially accepted, he must already be able to speak the new language" (p. 35).

How can teachers and other adults work to help young children who speak different languages learn and play together? The research on this topic is, unfortunately, not definitive. A 2010 review by the Center for Early Care and Education Research—Dual Language Learners found 13 peer-reviewed studies published between 2000 and 2010 [2]. Their report focuses on literature that compares the social and emotional development of DLLs to non-DLLs in the domains of self-regulation, social competence and cognition, and problem behaviors. As the literature is so scant, no systematic conclusions about differences between DLLs and non-DLLs could be drawn, and there was insuffi-

cient data on how other contributory factors (e.g., immigration status, language proficiency level) might affect DLLs' social and emotional development. The study concludes that the research literature is not extensive enough to draw firm generalizable conclusions, as the DLL populations considered, and the methods used, were too diverse.

The lack of definitive quantitative data, however, should not deter teachers and other educators from ensuring that young children find a warm and welcoming place among their peers. Classroom teachers and other educators can help by ensuring that they have a grasp of the normal trajectory of second language acquisition, by creating opportunities for interaction across language groups, and by acknowledging and respecting every student's home language.

What Teachers Can Do

Understand normal language acquisition.

It is useful for teachers to have an understanding of the normal process of second language acquisition in young children. Children who find themselves in a situation where they are faced with a new language to learn typically go through what is termed a "silent period" in which they may listen, but not speak [3]. Younger children often experience this stage for longer than older children [1]. It is important that teachers recognize this as a developmental step in language acquisition, and do not confuse this with a language disability.¹ Even during this silent period, teachers should give the child ample opportunities for peer interaction.

Create opportunities for interaction.

Teachers should not assume that children from diverse linguistic backgrounds will socialize across language groups without intervention. Rather, researchers recommend creating structured opportunities for children from different language groups to communicate [4].

Monique Patè describes one such structured activity implemented in a multilingual preschool classroom [5]. In this classroom, teachers had observed children playing and talking with children from the same language group but saw little play across language groups. They devised a play-based thematic unit which was structured so that preschoolers would collaborate in small groups with children other than their usual playmates. The theme of the project emerged organically from teachers' observation of the children's interests and play. Across a period of five weeks, the children worked in their teacher-assigned groups to create a dinosaur theme park in the block play area of their classroom. Children created the theme park in a step-by-step fashion, and the teachers honored the collaborative work by documenting the project—each group gathered for a group photo with their work. Teachers also incorporated a question-and-answer session at the end of each play period to encourage children to discuss and respond to questions about their work. "Their enthusiasm about working together and creating something unique to share with the rest of the class looked like it would break any language barrier" [5, p. 17].

Cherish the home language.

Research on young children and racial attitudes suggests that children may need explicit reinforcement from adults to foster positive attitudes toward people from other races (at least for White children) [6]. Although there is no parallel research to date on attitudes of majority language speakers toward minority speakers, an explicitly respectful and favorable attitude toward children's home languages expressed by authority figures seems likely to encourage positive interaction across linguistic differences. Teachers who speak the home language of a child tend to rate their relationships with children as less prone to conflict, and one research study found that the more teachers used the child's home language in the classroom, the less likely was the child to be a victim of bullying [7].

Learning to speak the language of every child in a heterogeneous multilingual classroom is daunting and challenging, but learning a few words of each child's language—hello, goodbye, please, and thank you—is a much more manageable task. Teachers can show each child that their language is valued by learning a few words and sharing these with the child's classmates. This strategy demonstrates to all the children that their language differences are valued and respected by the adults and authority figures around them.

Teachers can also incorporate students' languages into the classroom by stocking the classroom library with multilingual books and even by asking family members to read and record the books so that the class has audio books in several languages. Other print materials might

include labels around the classroom in English and the home language, perhaps with pictures to assist children's comprehension. For more detail on these and other strategies for creating a supportive environment inclusive of home languages, see the materials published by Head Start on this topic [8].

Conclusion

Language and social development are intrinsically linked. It is through communicating with their peers that children develop skills of negotiation, compromise, and collaboration, and it is critical that young children have opportunities to practice and refine these skills among members of their peer group. Teachers and other educators of young children can nurture the social development of language minority children by understanding typical second language development stages, by building opportunities to socialize across language groups into classroom activities, and by respecting children's home languages.

Notes

1. It is of course equally important that DLL children who do have language or learning disabilities are identified early. Researchers recommend assessment in the students' home language as an important step to distinguish the normal pathways of language acquisition from language impairments (see e.g. Peña, Bedore, & Gibson, this issue).

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Nurturing Urban Native American Families through Preschool Family Literacy Celebrations

Susan McWilliams, Tami Maldonado, and Paula Szczepaniak

Most Native Americans (NAs) live in urban settings [1]. Only half of indigenous ninth-grade students graduate with their non-native, same-age peers [2]. New and innovative approaches to teaching urban NAs to increase their graduation rates are urgently needed. One such innovative approach infuses cultural education into curriculum: young children from diverse Native Nations, many of whom have additional non-Native heritage, attend an experimental, urban Native Indian Centered Education (NICE) preschool in the Midwest. The preschool focuses on building and strengthening family literacy resources and developing family-school-community partnerships to strengthen literacy.

Community Partnerships

Native tradition holds to the value that it takes a village to raise a child, so we strive to include community in the program. Our many community partners share expertise and donate children's books. We have been honored to work with an internationally renowned glass artist who has provided families with the chance to represent their culture and redefine themselves through art. We also include NA storytellers and role models at family events to help inspire and strengthen our students and their families.

Story Celebrations

NA "literature" springs from the oral tradition of passing stories down through generations. With this rich history in mind, we place storytelling and reading at the heart of our program. Many parents initially express discomfort at the idea of reading with their children. As a result, our pre-K program's mission is, in part, to encourage and empower families to discover and celebrate the power of family reading. With the goal of helping all children become lifelong readers, we embed reading and other literacy activities into every family event. Monthly family fun afternoons, quarterly family nights, and special cultural events like our annual Harvest Celebration and year-end powwow all make room for reading and the fine art of storytelling [3]. We include formal story time during which parents and family members can watch, interact, and learn as we read and share engaging, high-quality children's literature. Our classroom lending library loans books to families on a weekly basis while the district NA office puts new books into the hands of our children for their home libraries many times during the year. The natural enthusiasm of the students helps erase inhibitions on the part of parents. Reading then becomes a mutually gratifying family experience.

Reflections

The number of families participating has more than doubled in three years. Parent involvement at school has increased. Parents have become better advocates for their children as they have moved on to kindergarten. Families are taking pride in the program by talking about it and encouraging others from the community to enroll their children. Families that move on still come back to visit.

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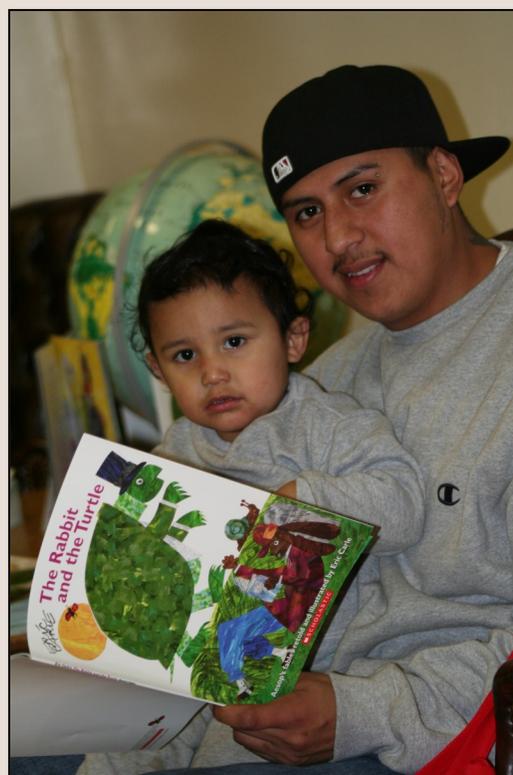


Figure 1. Reading with Dad at family night

One Institution's Journey: Training Teachers of Young English Learners

Donna McCrary, Jennifer Sennette, and David L. Brown

To help EL children achieve better outcomes in education, teacher preparation programs need to ensure that pre-service teachers are prepared adequately to work in diverse classrooms with ELs. One teacher education program¹ used the following six-step process to meet the challenge.²

1. Visiting Scholars

Well-known researchers in the EL field were invited to faculty colloquia to present and explain their research. As the year progressed, the presentations grew increasingly complex, focusing on various EL instructional models and revealing more information concerning the ELs' transition to English [1].

2. Book Studies

To create foundational knowledge, faculty read several books discussing important EL issues: *Realizing the Vision of Two-Way Immersion: Fostering Effective Program and Classroom* [2], *Making Content Comprehensible for English Learners: The SIOP® Model* [3], and *Bilingual and ESL Classroom: Teaching in Multicultural Contexts* [4].

3. External Learning Activities and Professional Development

Throughout the year, faculty members attended conferences (e.g., Council for Exceptional Children International Conference, National Association for Bilingual Education Conference) and visited models of EL-focused classrooms that incorporated the two-way immersion model and the content integration model [1].

4. Skill Identification

Members of the early childhood team reviewed research, book studies, conference proceedings, and classroom visits to identify skills needed by pre-service early childhood educators. These skills then were grouped around the following five themes [1]:

- Legal foundations for teaching EL children,
- Planning and managing learning environment,
- Assessing and evaluating young EL children,
- Instructional content and practice, and
- Collaboration and collaborative partnership.

5. Course Revision

Skills related to each theme were either aligned with or added to current early childhood education syllabi. For example, within one pre-service course that focused on the creation of developmentally appropriate learning environments, two collaboration skills were aligned with an existing course skill focusing on family collaboration. In another instance an EL collaboration skill was added to a course that did not contain a focus on collaboration with families [1].

6. Assignment Modification

After skills were aligned with and/or added to existing course syllabi, faculty met to discuss and design related learning activities and assignments. For example, new learning activities designed to develop EL collaboration skills include examination of current events that affect EL families through news articles, use of videos, outside readings, and relevant EL websites in the course support materials. New assignments developed by faculty include a Spanish/English literacy backpack that goes home with children, newsletters and classroom calendars created using suggestions from the U. S. Department of Education's Toolkit for Hispanic Families [5], and the evaluation of a classroom learning environment that calls for reflecting on the quantity and quality of class and EL family collaboration [1]. Building strong teacher preparation

programs is key to providing educational equity for all learners, and institutions striving to meet the challenge of preparing pre-service teachers for the diversity they will experience in their future classrooms need to be supported.

Note

1. Overall, approximately 30 faculty members were involved in the PD, and about 1,000 students are enrolled in the program each year.
2. The project was funded by a U.S. Department of Education National Professional Development grant (2007) targeting pre-service teachers of young ELs.

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Bilingual Language Assessment in Educational Contexts

Elizabeth D. Peña, Lisa M. Bedore, and Todd A. Gibson

Diagnostic decisions about language ability usually require that the target group be compared to a normative group to provide information about the expected range of performance at a given age. Performance below the expected range is interpreted as language impairment, assuming that there are no experiential circumstances that would explain low performance (e.g., lack of exposure, illness). Bilingual children are exposed to varying levels of L1 and L2 [1], and levels change over time [2]. This variability can affect performance on language tests given in either the home or school language, resulting in low scores that are not indicative of language impairment. Thus it is important to consider the language learning context of young bilingual children in the U.S. in order to make these comparisons.

In monolingual homes, children hear a range of simple and complex language input from adults and children in one language alone. We know less about the specific nature of language input in bilingual homes, but it is probably more variable. Some children come from the homes of first-generation immigrants where the parents primarily speak the heritage language, and English is introduced via siblings and other interactions. In other homes, parents may be in the process of learning English. Children's language environments also vary in regard to when children start to learn a second language. Starting to learn English at school entry is considered a common pattern in U.S. bilingual children. Interview data from a sample of 1,209 Spanish-English bilinguals showed that about 40% of the children were exposed to both languages from birth, 40% started to learn English at school entry, and the remaining children started to learn English some

time between 2 and 4 years of age [3]. Similarly, in a study of 76 bilingual Head Start children, 58% of the mothers reported using both English and Spanish from birth, and the other 42% reported using mainly Spanish at home [4].

Like home context, school context varies. Some young children participate in bilingual programs that offer differing degrees of English and heritage language support. Other children participate in programs where English is introduced more rapidly, with the support of English as a second language programs in some but not all cases. Even when children nominally participate in the same programs, the way that these programs are realized classroom to classroom and school to school may vary considerably based on the teacher and school contexts.

Why Focus on Language?

In the American educational context, language and math skills have evolved to hold a central place in the curriculum. They are the "three Rs: reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic." Similar expressions do not exist for musical, spatial, and kinesthetic skills. One can be musically inept without being considered disordered [5]. Why? The answer is likely due to the fact that language and math skills, unlike musical skills, are tied to educational success, and educational success is tied to success in life [6]. If musical skills were required for success in our culture, ineptitude in music would likely be considered a disorder. Reading and writing, on the other hand, are the primary language-related skills in the U.S. educational curriculum, and failure in these skills is associated with a variety of serious social ills [6]. A large body of research shows that literacy skills build on oral language skills [7].

Appropriate assessment of oral language skills is therefore critical to maximizing an individual's educational success and increasing access to the social goods associated with it. Testing bilinguals in only one language can lead to underestimation of language ability. Waiting to make diagnostic decisions risks denial of needed services. It is critical that assessments appropriate for young children are selected for this population. Such assessments should, at a minimum, gather assessment evidence from realistic settings and situations, and incorporate multiple instances of evidence gathered over time.

Not only is appropriate assessment of language skills important for educational attainment, it also is important for social success. Language is an integral part of our identity and associates us with a social group [8; 9]. Within and across social groups, individuals make judgments based on perceived oral language skill. For example, children with language difficulties and children who do not speak the majority language are similarly dispreferred by peers [10]. That means that bilingual children with language impairment have two social strikes against them from the outset. Appropriate assessment of bilingual language skills can have a direct impact on social success within the educational context.

Why, What, and How do We Assess?

There are many reasons that children are tested in schools. These include assessment for the purpose of determining ability, determination of content mastery, and testing to assess progress. The purpose of assessment should determine selection of assessment content and context. These goals also apply to bilinguals, but use of L1 and L2 in testing depends on the purpose of the testing.

Careful consideration of the purpose for assessment, the information it will provide, and the way the test outcomes will be used determine use of L1 and L2 (see Figure 1). When one is conducting assessment of ability, for example IQ testing, learning, or language ability, both L1 and L2 should be utilized in testing to understand how children use their cognitive abilities in a given domain, regardless of language, and to ensure that they understand and can demonstrate their knowledge. In addition, strategies such as conceptual scoring (where responses in either language are credited if correct) can be used to capture best what the child knows and what he or she is able to learn. In some contexts it may be important to pay special attention to the child's first or stronger language. This might be important when probing skills that might not yet be expected in a developing L2 but should already be present in L1.

With respect to determination of content mastery one needs to determine whether this is to assess knowledge regardless of language (such as mathematics or motor skills). In such cases both languages of a bilingual child should be used. If there are questions related to which language is stronger in a given domain, or if the questions are about language knowledge in the home vs. school, language testing might include a comparison of performance in each language. Questions about acquisition of English should focus on English testing, and would likely be criterion-referenced to document best specific stages in learning.

Finally, progress monitoring requires similar considerations based on the particular domain and purpose. Monitoring of content acquisition would make sense in both languages using a conceptual strategy. In some circumstances, such as tracking progress in an ESL or English reading program, assessment in only one language is appropriate. In other circumstances,

such as monitoring of content acquisition, testing in both languages using conceptual scoring is appropriate.

Language assessment is utilized in the school context on a frequent basis. For bilinguals, especially young bilinguals in early stages of learning L1 and L2, it is important to consider both of their languages. The reasons for assessment and how the information will be utilized further determine whether and how both languages of children should factor in making decisions.

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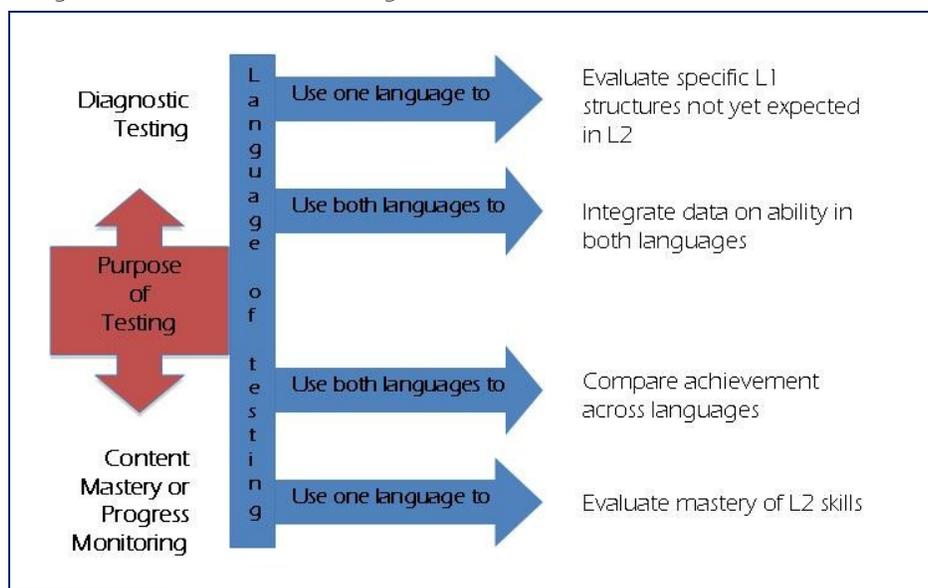


Figure 1. Language Testing Decision Tree

Assessment with Cultural Context in Mind: Recommendations for Community-Based Programs that Serve Young English Learners

Brenna Rivas and Paige Ware

Young ELs are born into linguistically and culturally rich environments in which they will be exposed to more than one language before they enter formal schooling. For young learners whose families have recently immigrated, navigating such complexity can be challenging. Many community service programs attempt to help these children and their families prepare for a transition to kindergarten in U.S. schools. However, understanding the effect of such community programs on a child's development requires much more than a checklist. In this article, we describe an approach to assessment that honors the complexity of multicultural contexts (see Table 1 for an overview).

An example of community service programs can be found in Dallas, Texas. Four agencies were charged with working to improve the school readiness of the children in a high-poverty urban setting. As university

researchers, we were tasked to provide formative feedback to these four agencies as they served approximately 700 low-income Hispanic families, many of whom were recent immigrants. We designed a longitudinal approach to assessment that captures the unique cultural and linguistic development of children preparing for kindergarten. The array of services and delivery approaches range widely: daily parenting and ESL classes for families, weekly in-home visits focused on child development from birth to three years old, and weekly pre-Kindergarten classes for children four to five years old and education classes for their parents. All four agencies place strong emphasis on access to community resources, the importance of education, and the role of the parent as a child's first and most important teacher.

In order to understand the effect these agencies have on the school readiness of children, we analyzed vocab-

ulary and cognitive development. All assessments were conducted in Spanish. We defined school readiness as chronological age and developmental age equivalency. To measure developmental age in cognition, for example, two instruments were selected to serve as one continuous measure to allow for longitudinal comparisons—the Early Learning Assessment Profile (birth - 36 months) and the Learning Assessment Profile-3 (36 - 72 months) [1]. We measure vocabulary both receptively, in terms of what children understand, and expressively, in terms of what they are capable of producing, using two primary instruments—the *Test de Vocabulario Imagenes Peabody/TVIP* (30 months and older) [2], and the *Expressive One Word Picture Vocabulary Test/EOWPVT* (48 months and older) [3]. While children can be assessed by measures of school readiness prior to kindergarten, the perceptions of their kindergarten teachers add an important

Table 1. Data Sources with Descriptions*

Data Source	Descriptions
Receptive vocabulary (PPVT)	Child points to various pictures in response to verbal requests
Expressive vocabulary (EOWPVT)	Child responds verbally to various questions about pictures
Cognitive development (ELAP/LAP-3)	Child engages in hands-on activities that demonstrate ability to sort, label, and distinguish features
Monthly home visits	Mother and child interact in their homes for 15-minute videotaped sessions focused on reading, toys, and mealtimes
Parent conversations	Researcher visits families monthly and asks about the child's development
Parent behaviors/knowledge	Surveys elicit information at the beginning and end of the program to capture changes
Teacher interviews	Teachers describe participating children's school readiness and parental involvement

*Note. All assessments are conducted in the child's primary language of Spanish.



Websites Offering Learning Activities for Young ELs

- <http://learnenglishkids.britishcouncil.org/en/>: language games, songs, and stories
- <http://www.literacycenter.net/>: activities to learn numbers, colors, shapes, reading and writing letters and words
- <http://www.starfall.com/>: reading instruction and reading games
- <http://www.rif.org/kids/readingplanet.htm>: language-related activities and stories
- <http://www.storyplace.org/preschool/other.asp>: stories and language-learning activities
- <http://pbskids.org/>: a variety of reading, writing, and learning activities
- <http://pbskids.org/berenstainbears/games/story/index.html>: learning activities to prepare children for school
- <http://www.storylineonline.net/>: stories read by actors from the ScreenActors' Guild.
- <http://www.scholastic.com/clifford/>: reading and writing activities
- <http://www.eduplace.com/kids/hmsc/content/simulation/#gk>: science content from Houghton Mifflin Science Series

layer to the longitudinal study. When the children exit the community services and transition into kindergarten, their teachers are interviewed using a structured protocol about each child's school readiness, vocabulary development, and parental involvement. Because teachers are not told which of the children in their class were participants in the programs, these interviews allow us to make blind contrasts between the school readiness of children participating in the agencies and those who did not participate.

Certainly, young children between the ages of 0-5 years receive most of their influence from their family. In order to capture the effect of programs on families, we invite parents to provide us with their responses to a Spanish-language survey. Questions are worded in culturally sensitive ways to ask parents about what they know that might help prepare their child for kindergarten and about what they actually do to help support their child along the path toward school. Parent responses are collected at the beginning and end of their participation in the agency programs so that we can analyze potential change in knowledge and behaviors across time. These surveys allow us to paint a picture of patterns that emerge from the larger community, as we typically collect 600 pre- and post-surveys each calendar year. However, we also complement this information by conducting weekly informal, recorded conversations with up to 50 families each year.

We schedule monthly home visits with 12 case-study families that allow us to learn from families on their own terms. Each month, we observe parents and children during play, reading, and meal preparation. These visits build a trusting relationship with families and offer a window into the types of literacy and language interactions that take place in contexts familiar to the child. Because home visits occur each month, we also can capture subtle shifts in the child's language development and in how the parents' interactions might be shifting in response to their participation in the early childhood programs of the community. We document, for example, how parents manage behavior, make personal connections, reinforce basic kindergarten concepts, and expand their child's vocabulary. We also record informal conversations with parents about the rewards and challenges of parenting and of participating in the community programs.

Despite the strength of the combined data of assessments, surveys, and conversations, any large-scale assessment involving young ELs must also be complemented by an attempt to respect the complexity of individual children and their families across time. Our approach embeds various layers to better understand how programs might be influencing families with young English learners on their way to kindergarten.

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