

Building Skills In Two Languages

EarlyEdU
Alliance™

A Higher Education Collaborative for
Head Start and Early Childhood Teaching

Overview

This module highlights practices for teachers who are working with children who are dual language learners to:

- Teach new words and clear meanings.
- Have meaningful conversations.
- Encourage children's home languages in addition English development.



**By the end of this module,
you should be able to:**

- Teach dual language learners new vocabulary and clear meanings.
- Have conversations with dual language learners that build language skills.
- Share ways to talk with families about continuing to use their home languages with their children.

Intentional Teaching Framework



What Is a Dual Language Learner?



A child learning two languages may:

- Learn the languages at the same time (often from birth).
- Develop a second language while learning a first language.

Developing Two Languages at Once



Typical patterns:

- Birth up to 3 years
- Before a child has a vocabulary
- A simultaneous process of language development in both languages

Layering One on Top of the Other



- Usually children age 3 and older
- The way older children and adults learn concepts and languages
- New labels for existing concepts and words

Development Patterns

Young children who start using a second language later may:

- **Continue to use their home language.**
- Learn that their home language isn't working and **may observe.**
- Begin **using words and phrases** in the new language.
- Begin to **communicate in sentences.**

Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework

		CENTRAL DOMAINS				
		APPROACHES TO LEARNING	SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT	LANGUAGE AND LITERACY	COGNITION	PERCEPTUAL, MOTOR, AND PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT
▲ INFANT/TODDLER DOMAINS		Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Cognition	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
● PRESCHOOLER DOMAINS		Approaches to Learning	Social and Emotional Development	Language and Communication	Mathematics Development	Perceptual, Motor, and Physical Development
				Literacy	Scientific Reasoning	

Supporting English and Home Languages

Which Language for Teaching?

Monolingual: Most early childhood teachers speak one language well—**English**—and should model that with home language support.

Bilingual: Teachers who speak the home language of the majority of the children in the program and English can teach in **both languages** with specific times for instruction in each language.



“...while all teachers cannot teach in all languages, **they can support all languages** by learning strategies to systematically introduce English during the preschool years while simultaneously promoting home language maintenance.”

(Espinosa, 2013, p. 1)

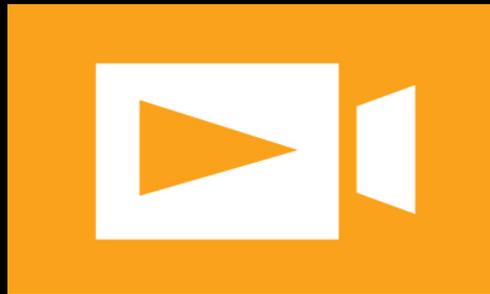


VIDEO

Meeting the Challenge

Think about these questions while watching the video:

- Who can English-speaking teachers ask to help support home language development?
- What are strategies teachers can use to encourage children's home language development?



VIDEO: Meeting the Challenge



VIDEO

Video Debrief

What did you notice?

- Teachers can ask families, community members, and staff to support home languages.
- Strategies include posting labels and children's names in two languages.
- In a bilingual program, teachers can use each language in intentional ways.

Why Encourage Home Languages?



- Language systems become more complex the longer a child uses a language.
- Children can use concepts learned in their home language to compare and contrast new words.

Ways to Support Home Languages

Teachers who speak English can support home languages in their programs by:

- **Learning key words** in home languages
- **Posting labels and including books** in more than one language
- **Working with staff, families, and community volunteers** who speak children's home languages

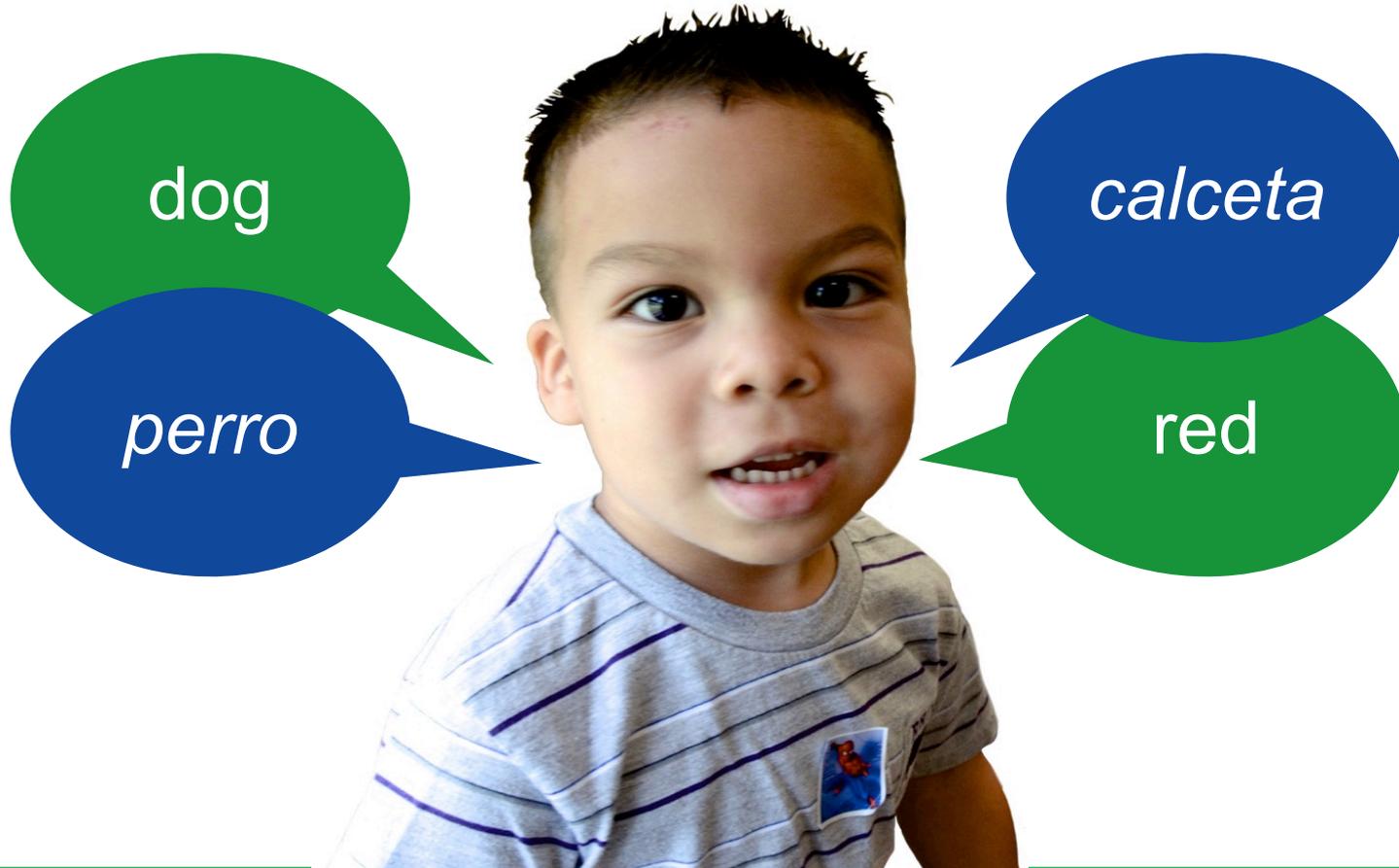
Benefits of Two Languages



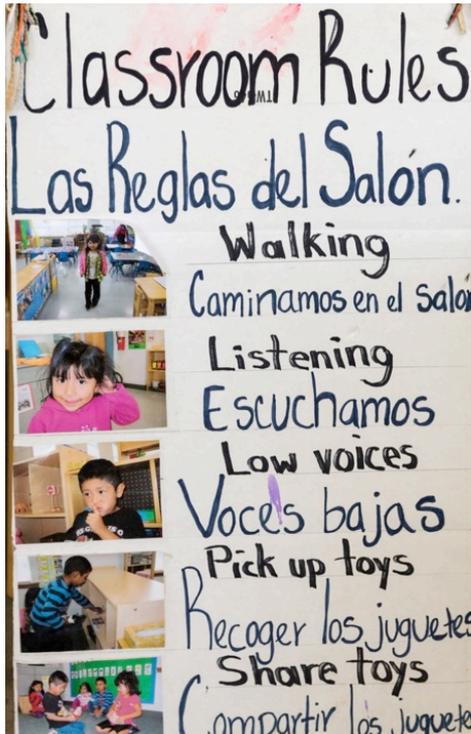
- Cognitive flexibility
- Ability to develop relationships in two languages
- Strong ties with community and culture

Teaching New Words

Process of Learning Vocabulary



Increase *Breadth* and *Depth*



Children learning two languages may have:

- Large gaps in vocabulary
- Less breadth (number of different words) and depth (knowledge of multiple meanings of the same word)

Strategies for Teaching New Words

- **Pre-teach** vocabulary words.
- Create activities that **encourage children to use and express** new words.
- **Use pictures, real objects, and gestures** with new words.
- **Use children's interests** to support language development.
- Teach children to **recognize similar words** across languages.



Meanings of Words

- Create small groups of two to three people.
- Choose one of the photos on the next slide.
- Brainstorm possible words you could teach children related to the activities in the photo.
- Develop child-friendly definitions and strategies to teach them to dual language learners.



Having Meaningful Conversations

Impact of Teacher Talk



The amount, diversity, and complexity of *teacher talk* in preschool predicted second language vocabulary skills in first grade.

Conversation Basics



- Ask open-ended questions
- Observe, wait, listen
- Comment on the child's interests
- Expand the child's comments

Talking with Dual Language Learners



During conversations:

- Repeat key words
- Adjust your language to match a child's cues
- Provide scaffolding
- Model language

The Need for Scaffolding

“The underlying principle for young DLLs (dual language learners) is that **they need additional scaffolds and supports to comprehend the meaning of lessons,** because they are simultaneously learning the new language while also learning the cognitive and conceptual content.”

(Espinosa, 2012, p. 15)

Encourage a Storytelling Format



In addition to reading and telling stories, use a storytelling approach to:

- Explain the day's plans.
- Help children to describe what they plan to do or did.

Interact at Different Stages

Child	Teacher
Using home language only	Provide language modeling and parallel talk (describe what the child is doing and seeing), teach new words
Observing and silent or speaking less	Continue language modeling and parallel talk, teaching new words, observe what the child is understanding
Using key phrases in the second language	Continue modeling, parallel talk, new words, and observing, add more words to extend language
Developing fluency in new language	Provide all of the above, adding more opportunities for child to express thoughts

When Children Aren't Talking

Children who speak a home language and enter an English-speaking class may just observe and listen at first.

- **Continue talking** to those children.
- **Describe what they are doing.**
- **Interact with them** even though they don't appear to understand.
- **Demonstrate interest** in their attempts to communicate.

Boosting Language Birth to 3



- Use a higher-pitched voice.
- Exaggerate your expressions and the sounds in the words you use.
- Repeat words or phrases over and over.

Teachers who are Bilingual...

Can use both languages in the classroom as part of an **intentional, balanced approach**.

Should use one language at a time **during instruction**.

Can switch languages in a discussion to support a specific, planned goal.

Children's Language Mixing

- Using elements of two languages together
- Borrowing words from the dominant language and using them when talking in the non-dominant one



Response to *Code Switching*



Answer in the language you usually use with the children in your program.

Example: If a child says, “Quiero mas blocks,” the teacher could hold up the choices and say, “You want more cube-shaped or prism-shaped blocks?”

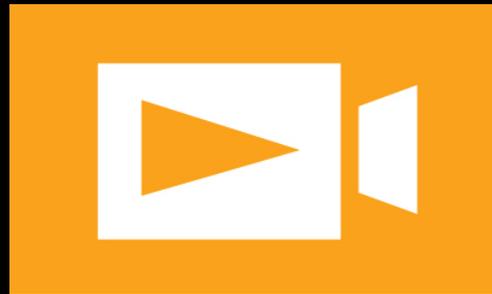


VIDEO

Conversation Dream

Think about these questions while watching the video:

- What effective practices does this teacher use during this conversation?
- How does the child respond?



VIDEO: Conversation Dream



Video Debrief

What did you notice?

- The teacher extends the conversation, repeating the child's words and adding more.
- She asks open-ended questions.
- She waits for answers.
- She scaffolds with hints.
- She provides a new word and its meaning.

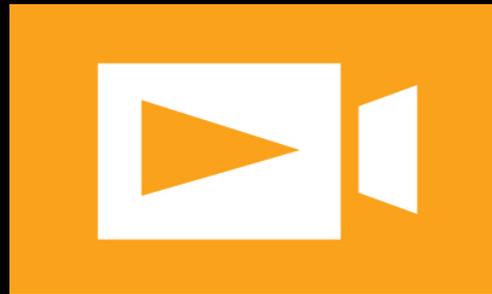


VIDEO

What Did You Eat?

Think about these questions while watching the video:

- What effective practices does this teacher use in these conversations?
- How do the children respond?



VIDEO: What Did You Eat?



Video Debrief

What did you notice?

- The teacher moves to the child's level and speaks warmly.
- She responds with more exact words.
- She asks questions and waits for answers.
- She responds by repeating children's words and adding more.

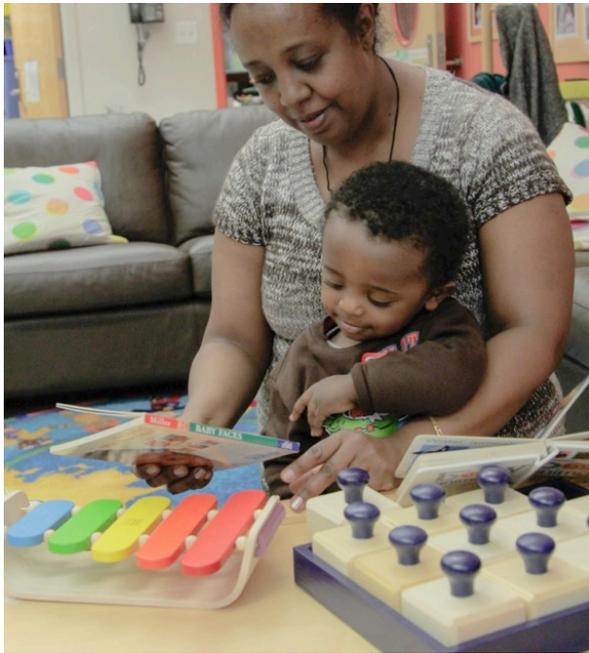


Preparing for a Fire Drill

- Imagine you speak English and have a new child in class who speaks only Mandarin. Your class is preparing for a fire drill.
- How could you have a conversation with that child to prepare him for the drill?
- What else could you do to help him understand and feel more comfortable?

Bringing It All Together

Partnering with Families



- Support families in their goals for their children.
- Explain how learning the home language supports children's English development.



**LEARNING
ACTIVITY**

One Scenario

Read the handout and reflect on these questions:

- What did the staff learn and how did they learn it?
- What could the staff do to avoid this situation in the future?

Using Information from Families

What you find out from families can help you:

- Create familiar situations for children and help them get their needs met.
- Provide new opportunities.
- Plan effective communication methods with families and children.
- Connect in the classroom with a child's interests and abilities.
- Add information to a child's portfolio.



Talking with Families

- Find a partner.
- Identify questions to ask families about language use and development and information about the importance of home languages to share with families.
- Take turns playing the roles of the teacher and parents and asking questions and giving responses.



**SESSION
SUMMARY**

- Have rich interactions with dual language learners that match their language development.
- Teach new vocabulary in ways that children learning more than one language can understand.
- Communicate regularly with families to effectively support English and home language development.



Talking with Children Learning Multiple Languages

1. Choose a child in your class to have a in-depth conversation with, and observe that child.
2. Make a plan to have an extended conversation using the planning form.
3. Have the conversation.
4. Write a reflection about the experience.



Talking with Families

1. Choose a child's family—in consultation with other staff—to talk with about language goals and development in English and home languages.
2. Get any needed permissions to film the conversation.
3. Make a plan to talk with the family and to record the conversation.
4. After you film the conversation, write a reflection by answering the questions in the assignment.



A Higher Education Collaborative for
Head Start and Early Childhood Teaching

