

IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURE ARTICLE:

**Dual-Language Learners
in the Preschool Classroom**
page 1

CLASSROOM HINTS:

**Supporting Dual-Language
Learners With HighScope**
page 12

TRAINER-TO-TRAINER:

**Supporting Understanding
in Any Language**
page 14

SPECIAL EDUCATION:

The Gift of Language
page 16

ASK US:

page 18

NEWS BRIEFS:

page 19

Want to read more issues of *Extensions*?
Join the HighScope Membership
Association and receive *Extensions*
in your inbox and have access to the
Extensions archives. It's easy to join!
Visit highscope.org/membership.

Dual-Language Learners in the Preschool Classroom

BY KAREN N. NEMETH, LEAD CONSULTANT, LANGUAGE CASTLE LLC

It is well known that early language development is critical for the acquisition of literacy skills, general academic achievement, and the social and emotional well-being that comes from being able to communicate (Dickinson & Porche, 2011). Early educators are therefore intentional about creating language-rich environments for young children. Meeting this responsibility, however, can be challenging when teacher and child do not speak the same language. A preschool teacher from Morristown, New Jersey, commented that she felt she was providing lots of print and spoken language but wasn't sure how much language her students were actually receiving. Having children in her class who did not speak English made her much more aware of the challenge of making language connections.



Welcoming dual-language learners into the preschool classroom means giving these children several layers of support.

“Most early childhood teachers need skills, intentional strategies, and resources to work effectively with children (and their families) who are learning in multiple languages.”

PUBLISHER CREDITS

HighScope Extensions is a practical resource for early childhood teachers, trainers, administrators, and child care providers. It contains useful information on the HighScope Curriculum and on HighScope's training network.

Jennifer Burd
Adam Robson
Joanne Tangorra
Editors

Nancy Brickman
Director of Publications

Nancy Goings
Publications Assistant

Sherry Barker
Membership Manager

Carrie Hernandez
Director of Marketing and Communication

Produced by HighScope Press, a division of HighScope Educational Research Foundation

ISSN 2155-3548

©2016 HighScope Foundation
The HighScope Foundation is an independent, nonprofit organization founded by David Weikart in Ypsilanti, MI in 1970.

Welcoming children from diverse language backgrounds into the early childhood classroom requires giving children several layers of support. The purpose of this article is to help teachers provide that assistance by simultaneously supporting learning of both the home language and English, with cultural sensitivity. After a look at the changing picture of dual-language learning, we begin by summarizing how young children develop English language and their home-language skills at the same time they may be adapting to a new culture. The article then focuses on the strategies that preschool teachers (whether they are themselves mono- or bilingual) can use to support young children who are learning another language, in addition to their home language.

English Learners — A Changing Picture

Children who are growing up with two or more languages comprise a significant portion of all students in the United States. In early childhood education, the term we use for these children is dual-language learner, or DLL. (K-12 schools generally use the term English-language learner, or ELL.) According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2030, the number of children whose home language is not English will grow from its current rate of 22 percent to 40 percent of the school-age population (Magruder, Whitcomb, Espinosa, & Matera, 2013). Immigration and birth rates mean this figure will increase more rapidly for preschoolers (Center for Public Education, 2012). In Head Start, for example, the number of enrolled children whose primary language is not English is

approaching one-third (Office of Head Start, 2014), but what is more compelling is the finding that more than 85 percent of Head Start classrooms have at least one child who is a DLL. Regardless of what the national statistics say about linguistic diversity, it is important to remember that most early childhood teachers need skills, intentional strategies, and resources to work effectively with children (and their families) who are learning in multiple languages.

Young DLLs may appear to demonstrate gaps in basic mathematics and reading skills when tested only in English at the start of elementary school, (Garcia & Frede, 2010). As a result, policymakers and practitioners are



The number of children growing up with two or more languages is increasing in the United States.

“Unless teachers and families effectively support both the home language and English, children can lose the ability to understand and speak their first language, or fail to find a balance between the two languages” (Puig 2010; Castro, Ayankoya, & Kasprzak, 2011).

concerned about finding strategies for reducing or preventing such gaps. We know, for example, that a strong home-language base makes it easier for young children to learn content and to learn English (August & Shanahan 2006; Genesee 2010, Castro, Garcia, & Markos, 2013). However, supporting the many different home languages and dialects that appear in early childhood classrooms is often daunting. Unless teachers and families effectively support both the home language and English, children can lose the ability to understand and speak their first language, or fail to find a balance between the two languages (Puig 2010; Castro, Ayankoya, & Kasprzak, 2011).

How Children Learn First and Second Languages

From birth, children progress through predictable stages of language development as they learn the language or languages present in their environment (of course, we know that the actual times of moving from one stage to the next vary greatly from child to child). This sequence is the same for children learning one language or two or more languages.

- 0–6 months:** Cooing
- 6–12 months:** Babbling (practicing sounds and conventions of speech, and understanding many words before producing any real words)
- 12–20 months:** Speaking one word at a time, rapidly increasing receptive vocabulary (the words children understand)
- 18–24 months:** Producing utterances of two or more words (telegraphic speech — where two or three words represent the meaning of an entire sentence; for example, saying “truck go” to mean “The truck is going!”)
- 24–36 months:** Speaking in sentences, having conversations, recounting simple stories.

Preschoolers learning English as a second language after they have begun learning a first one will also typically progress through several stages (Tabors, 2008). The variability of how and when these stages happen can be even greater for these children than for children learning a single language, depending on how well-developed their first language may be and how well their first language transfers to their second (Sandhoffer & Uchikoshi, 2013).

- In **stage one**, children keep using their home language at school but may begin to say less or even stop talking if the school environment does not support it.
- In **stage two**, children observe interactions and develop receptive language, but

“Many experts emphasize that the process of learning a second language does not eliminate the first language and should not be thought of as doing so.”

may not yet be willing to express the language they have learned. At stage two, a child may go right to his seat at the table when he hears the teacher announce lunch time, but is not ready to reply when asked what kind of sandwich he wants.

- In **stage three**, children understand the rhythms and intonations of English and begin to use some key phrases. You may hear “telegraphic speech” — for example, “Up!” can mean “Look up at the bird!” while “Up?” can mean “Will you reach up and get me that toy?” Children also employ “formulaic speech” — using memorized phrases that serve a function when a gesture or word is added. For example, “I want ____” plus pointing might mean “I want an apple.”
- In **stage four**, children have informal fluency in the new language, including the ability to speak in full sentences and hold conversations. Even when they have progressed to the fourth stage, young DLLs still think and understand many things in their first language and will continue to need support and experiences in that language while continuing to develop their English.



Supporting both the home language and the new language is important to optimal development of children's communication skills.

Many experts emphasize that the process of learning a second language does not eliminate the first language and should not be thought of as doing so. Some authors describe the process of “interlanguage” use (Cheatham & Ro, 2010), while others use the term “translanguaging” (Garcia & Wei, 2014), to describe the continuing use of elements of both languages that occurs naturally in bilingual children and adults. These experts recommend that this enhanced use of both languages to support communication is further evidence that early support of both English and home language development is needed by the developing child.

The HighScope Key Developmental Indicator in English Language Learning

D. Language, Literacy, and Communication

30. English Language Learning:

(If applicable)
Children use English and their home language(s) (including sign language).

Description: Children understand and use English and their home language(s). They adjust the language they use to the person with whom they are communicating. Children know there are different ways of speaking and different writing systems (alphabets).

FREE Early Childhood Teaching Resources

Activities and strategies for educating young children

In-depth articles about early childhood education research

Countless videos demonstrating the HighScope approach



SIGN UP NOW!

At the same time they are learning another language, children may also be adjusting to the conventions of another culture, including when and how it is appropriate to speak (Rogoff, 2003), while also adjusting to a new home and new school. They may need some time to experience the new language before they are ready to say words in that language. Although some theorists call this a “silent period,” not all DLLs experience this. Silence in preschool can also be a sign of hearing loss, shyness, developmental delay, or stress in the child’s life and should not be ignored.

Remember that even native speakers of any age can take four to ten years to fully learn a language (Bialystok, 2001). Therefore, adults should hold reasonable expectations for the progress children can make during the year or two they spend in preschool and should continue to support the home language throughout that time. It is also important to keep in mind that much of what the child has learned before coming to school is mentally represented and understood in his home language. To build on each child’s prior knowledge, connecting to those home-language words and concepts will be essential to effective early education.

Teaching Strategies to Support DLL Children

It is a commonly held belief that early childhood educators should focus on teaching young DLLs to speak English. However, research shows that the most important task for adults is to pave the way for DLLs to understand the concepts and content they need to learn in the early years (Espinosa, 2013). The strategies given below will help. Too much time spent on “teaching” English will reduce the time children spend on learning much-needed concepts and content. Supports for the home language and culture make learning more accessible. When exploring nutritious foods, for example, ask families to send in the names of foods they consider healthy and nutritious in their regular meals, so you can incorporate the names and familiar foods in class books or displays. Explicit supports for learning English are also needed. Teachers need to take more time to explain and demonstrate the meanings of words for all children, and for DLLs that means making connections between new words and words they already know in the home language (Ackerman & Tazi, 2015). With these attitudes and practices setting the stage, educators can then use the following specific strategies to help children maintain their primary language while learning in English.

Encourage children to communicate in whatever language they choose.

As noted above, the more children know in their first language, the stronger the transfer to a second one. Therefore, it is important for them to speak and write in whatever language(s) they can. Placing children who speak the same language together in the same classroom or small group will facilitate their rich home-language practice

“Incorporating a range of music and stories celebrates cultural diversity while helping children retain their home language as they learn English.”

during play, even if the teacher doesn’t understand what they say. Don’t be concerned when children “code switch” (mix the two languages) because it’s a sign they are learning to use all of the language resources at their disposal to communicate in more effective ways. Adults, however, should try to be consistent in speaking one language during a conversation or interaction with a child. (National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness, 2014). Begin by conversing as a partner with children — initiate with a comment or observation about what children are doing. Eventually, it might be appropriate to ask questions. Learn to ask some key questions — such as “What are you doing?” — in the languages of the children, to encourage them to answer in their home language so they may have more vocabulary at their disposal.

At the art easel during work time, Teresa is painting. The teacher approaches Teresa.

Teacher: “Teresa, you are painting.”

Teresa: “I do (pause) árboles.”

Teacher: “Árboles? Trees?”

Teresa: “He go on tree. He climb.”

Teacher: “He is climbing the tree.” (with gesture).

Teresa: “He fall off.”

Teacher: “Is he ok?”

Teresa: “Si, he put (long pause) vendaje.”

Teacher: Repeats *vendaje* with a questioning voice.

Teresa: “On feet.”

Teacher: “Oh, he hurt his feet?”

Teresa: “Vendaje” (points to a mark on the paper).

Teacher: “Bandaid!”

Teresa: Smiles broadly.

Teacher: “It’s a colorful bandaid.”

Teresa: “Gracias, teacher!”

Sing songs, read books, and tell stories in children’s home languages as well as English. Invite children and families to share songs, fairy tales, and rhymes from home, and to teach these to the class. Incorporating a range of music and stories celebrates cultural diversity while helping children retain their home language as they learn English. Make an effort to select songs and stories that build vocabulary that children can use during the activities of the school day. For example, a song that just includes greeting words in other languages is a nice introduction to world languages, but it doesn’t really add meaningful vocabulary children need for learning. Try singing

“If you don’t speak a child’s home language, learn a few key phrases and supplement these with gestures and facial expressions ‘to bring your words to life’” (Nemeth, 2012, p. 53).



Incorporating songs and stories from other cultures can help children retain their home language while learning English.

familiar English songs and substituting words from the children’s home language — for example, sing “Old MacDonald” and include animal names from other languages. Reading “Goldilocks and the Three Bears” in another language can build connections to words about comparisons, sizes, family members, and so on.

When reading the book *Ricitos de Oro y los tres Osos*, Jennifer (the teacher) asked

Dante if he liked soup or *sopa*. Dante smiled and said, “I eat mucho sopa.” Jennifer responded, “Oh you eat mucho sopa – lots of soup? Where do you see soup? ¿Dónde se ve sopa?” Dante happily pointed to the illustrations, saying “caliente, frío, perfecto” (hot, cold, just right)!

Support conversations in English at some times and the child’s language at other times. Using both languages helps DLLs achieve a balance, but be selective about when you do this (Nemeth, 2012). Using both languages mixed together disrupts the flow and meaning of a story or discussion. If you don’t speak a child’s home language, learn a few key phrases and supplement these with gestures and facial expressions “to bring your words to life” (Nemeth, 2012, p. 53). Focus on vocabulary — nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs — rather than grammar or sentence structure so DLL children can begin communicating with adults and peers quickly. Consider inviting volunteers from local colleges or organizations, or the family members of the children, to serve as play and conversation partners to support home language growth.

Michelle, a teacher in a preschool program, approached Diego at arrival time and said, “Hola, Diego! Como estas?” Diego replied “Bien.” Michelle repeated “Bien. Bienvenida,” as she made eye contact with Diego and his dad.

One preschool, located in a large, urban school district, offers dual-language immersion (DLI). Several classes for four-year-olds are set up so that half the children are native English speakers and the other half are native Spanish speakers. These DLI

“Encourage children to share their plans, or to recall what they did, in the form of a story that teachers can also write down and read again, in English or in the children’s home language.”

classes are taught by a pair of teachers so that the primary language used changes every other day. One day, all activities and discussions are in English; the next day, the Spanish-speaking teacher leads everyone to talk, learn, and play in Spanish. In this way, all of the children are developing bilingually. Each child gets clear support for his or her home language at some times, and has to work hard to learn the new language at other times, and all of the children progress together in the learning experiences that form the essential foundation for future academic success.



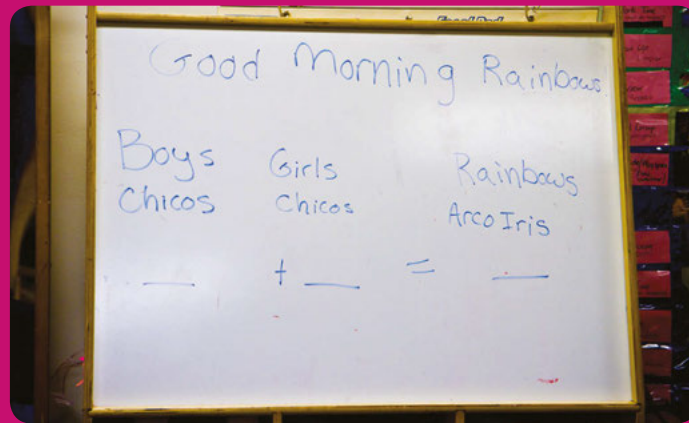
Try singing familiar English songs and substituting words from children’s home languages.

Kyle, an English speaking preschool teacher, learns and uses a short Spanish song entitled “Chocolate” during large-group Spanish time. Kyle tries to pronounce tres, and the children giggle. He has difficulty with rolling the /r/, and the children show him and help him practice the word tres. Everyone enjoys the experience, and Kyle reports that they often request this song.

Use narrative to enhance the fluency of DLL children. In addition to telling and reading stories in the conventional sense, use “storytelling” throughout the daily routine. For example, think of the message board as a “story” about what will happen that day. Encourage children to share their plans, or to recall what they did, in the form of a story that teachers can also write down and read in English or in the children’s home language. At arrival and pickup times, children are often full of stories about something they saw on the way to school or what they and their families will do that evening or on the weekend. Storytelling enhances listening and speaking skills — valuable traits for both native English speakers and dual-language learners.

“Use affirming strategies such as smiling, nodding, making specific comments about what children are doing, and showing that you are attending to and understanding their talk as they practice their new language.”

At lunch time, Angelique told Lori, her teacher, a story about how her little sister cried all night. Angelique said, “She cry and she cry and she cry. I no sleep!” Lori said, “You seem so upset and tired — did you fall asleep later?” Angelique replied “I sleep in car.”



The message board can be another important tool for supporting DLL's language development.

Avoid unnecessary praise. If you observe a teacher who peppers her interactions with empty praise words, you can usually see how this behavior interrupts the flow and meaning of conversations with a child. This is even more of an issue when young DLLs are involved. Use affirming strategies such as smiling, nodding, making specific comments about what children are doing, and showing that you are attending to and understanding their talk as they practice their new language. Making a commitment to partner in their play is another affirming strategy. Remember that children depend on hearing high-quality language models that they can imitate and adopt. Adding empty praise words can disrupt this learning process.

Right before cleanup time, Anna said, “When happy music come on, we clean up!” Jeff, her teacher, said, “Anna, you remembered what happens just before cleanup time. You are ready!”

Conclusion

The key to working effectively with young children who are DLLs is to focus on communication, relationships, and content. All young children grow up using language for the purpose of communicating and building relationships. Supporting active learning and communication rather than the passive learning of isolated skills will help

“Remember that children depend on hearing high-quality language models that they can imitate and adopt.”

those young brains develop as they should, whether in one language or two or more languages. All young children need to build their fund of content knowledge across all domains. They need to feel successful and often do if these strategies are applied in the context of supportive relationships. Providing engaging, hands-on activities that foster exploration, imagination, and discussion with peers and adults will offer the

greatest potential for learning in two languages. Enhance that learning by offering explicit explanations, nonverbal cues, visual supports, and clear connections between the two languages. With a strong understanding of first- and second-language development and these few strategies, every early childhood educator can be successful in a multilingual classroom. Building multiple languages can benefit every child now and for the future.



Supporting active learning helps children's brains develop optimally, whether in one language or two or more languages!

References

- Ackerman, D., & Tazi, Z. (2015). *Enhancing young Hispanic dual language learners' achievement: Exploring strategies and addressing challenges*. Princeton, NJ: Educational Testing Service.
- August, D., & Shanahan, T. (Eds.). (2006). *Developing literacy in second-language learners: Report of the National Literacy Panel on Language-Minority Children and Youth*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Bialystok, E. (2001). *Bilingualism in development: Language, literacy, and cognition*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Castro, D. C., Ayankoya, B., & Kasprzak, C. 2011. *The new voices, Nuevas Voces guide to cultural and linguistic diversity in early childhood*. Baltimore: Brookes.
- Castro, D. C., García, E. E., & Markos, A. M. (2013). *Dual language learners: Research informing policy*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina, Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute, Center for Early Care and Education–Dual Language Learners.
- Center for Public Education. (2012). *The United States of education: The changing demographics of the United States and their schools*. Retrieved from www.centerforpubliceducation.org/
- Cheatham, G. A., & Ro, Y. E. (2010). Young English learners' interlanguage as a context for language and early literacy development. *Young Children*, 65(4), 18–23.

“Providing engaging, hands-on activities that foster exploration, imagination, and discussion with peers and adults will offer the greatest potential for learning in two languages.”

- Dickinson, D. K., & Porche, M. V. (2011). Relation between language experiences in preschool classrooms and children's kindergarten and fourth-grade language and reading abilities. *Child Development*, 82(3), 870–886.
- Espinosa, L. M. (2013). *PreK-3rd: Challenging common myths about dual language learners*. (Pre-K-3rd Policy to Action Brief No. 10). New York: Foundation for Child Development. Retrieved from <http://fcd-s.org/sites/default/files/Challenging%20Common%20Myths%20Update.pdf>
- Garcia, E., & Frede, E. (2010). *Young English language learners: Current research and emerging directions for policy and practice*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Garcia, O., & Wei, L. (2014). *Translanguaging: Language, Bilingualism and Education*. Hampshire, England: Palgrave Pivot.
- Genesee, F. (2010). Dual language development in preschool children. In E. E. García & E. C. Frede (Eds.), *Young English language learners: Current research and emerging directions for policy and practice* (pp. 59–79). New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Magruder, E. S., Whitcomb, W. H., Espinosa, L. M., & Matera, C. (2013). Many languages, one teacher: Supporting language and literacy development for preschool dual language learners. *Young Children*, 68(1), pp. 8–15.
- National Center on Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness (2014). *Code switching: Why it matters and how to respond*. A workbook for Early Head Start/ Head Start Programs). Retrieved from <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/tta-system/cultural-linguistic/fcp/docs/code-switching.pdf>
- Nemeth, K. (2012). *Basics of supporting dual language learners*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children.
- Office of Head Start (2014). *Program information report, 2013–14*. Washington, DC.
- Puig, V. I. (2010). Are early intervention services placing home languages and cultures “at risk”? *Early Childhood Research and Practice*, 12(1). Retrieved from <http://ecrp.uiuc.edu/v12n1/puig.html>.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Sandhofer, C., & Uchikoshi, Y. (2013). Cognitive consequences of dual language learning: Cognitive function, language and literacy, science and mathematics, and social-emotional development. in L. Espinosa (Ed.), *California's best practices for teaching young dual language learners: Research overview papers*. Sacramento, CA: California Department of Education.
- Tabors, P. O. (2008). *One child, two languages: A guide for preschool educators of children learning English as a second language*. Baltimore: Brookes Publishing Company.

CLASSROOM HINTS

Supporting Dual-Language Learners With HighScope

BY KAREN N. NEMETH

The typical HighScope classroom has many advantages for supporting children who are learning in two or more languages, such as high quality, developmentally appropriate learning materials, and lots of opportunities for play-based interactions. Teachers using the HighScope Curriculum are already very thoughtful about preparing the learning environment and using adult-child interaction strategies to ease children's transition into preschool. Whether children are English speakers or dual-language learners (DLLs), they come to us with a range of language abilities. Let's look at the curriculum strategies through the lens of DLLs. As we do so, it is important to think about how each part of the classroom and each part of the day can be more understandable for DLLs.



Organizing and Labeling Your Classroom Environment

Label the classroom interest areas, and label shelves and material bins using labels that are understandable to young children (e.g., labels made from the object itself, tracings, photos, or catalog pictures). These strategies will certainly help DLLs. Now let's think of additional ways to build language with the labels in your multilingual classroom, as a way to support DLLs. Have the labels translated into the languages needed in the classroom (*tip*: Include phonetic spellings to help teachers pronounce the words). While children may still rely on the concrete objects or picture labels, the labels help the teachers use new words to effectively

support children's home language. Have the posted daily routine labeled in other languages. Include area signs, work-in-progress signs, and hand-washing signs, all labeled in other languages.

Greeting Time and Message Board

It may help to think of the message board as a three-dimensional communication tool with hooks for real items and photographs to show what's new or what will be happening. English speaking children are also becoming familiar with written communication; therefore, just as we create messages for young English speakers using real objects and photos, these items serve the same purpose for DLLs.

Similar to preparing "cue cards" or labels to remind yourself about welcome phrases, do the same for typical messages — for example, "Something new in the _____ area"; "_____ is absent"; "Two stay-home days/no school day."

Ask parents at dropoff time to tell you the names of new materials in their language; or, if parents can't come in to join the group for morning message, you might even send a brief text or email home so the family member can prepare the child to understand what will be discussed in the morning message.

After message board time is over, teachers can follow up individually with DLLs to make sure they understood the messages.

Additionally, visual cues such as a label or ring of note cards could be added to the classroom door to say "come in," "go out," "where are you going?" and "I'm happy to see you" in each language needed by children in the class. These can then be powerful language and literacy builders.

Plan-Do-Review

The plan-do-review process is a hallmark of the HighScope Curriculum, but the discussions during planning time and review are challenging when children don't speak the same language. Just like we support all young children new to planning, we want to use concrete planning strategies with DLLs. With DLLs, however, special effort must be made to help them first understand what the planning process is about by acting out the steps in the process that leads to playing with the choices made

during planning time. Use standard sentence forms and visual cues when asking planning questions. Accept children's gestures, actions, and words. For many children, planning begins with nonverbal communication as they express intentions through gestures and actions (Epstein and Hohmann, 2012, p. 253). Ask children to show the toy or area they want to play with, then make time to support them to pursue that plan.

Once you feel that children understand the planning concept and process, you can support their home language by pairing them with other children who speak the same language so they might engage in conversation about their plans even if the teacher doesn't understand them. Teachers could plan last with children who need more time to express their plans. And keep in mind even English speakers who are new to planning give vague and routine plans. Teachers can brainstorm concrete planning and recall strategies that require less verbal interaction and focus more on children's actual plans. For example, teachers could structure a visibility game, in which children take a flashlight and shine it on something they will play with (or that they played with if it's recall time).

Introduce several options for recall activities—again, starting with concrete strategies so children learn about the recall process first before moving into more abstract strategies such as sculpting

(e.g., forming play dough into the shape of a toy or material they used). Allow children to draw or sculpt things to express their experiences — and allow children to collaborate on these recalls to build interactions.

No matter what the strategy, the adult-child conversation is the most important component of both planning and recall time. Listening to children with interest, and commenting on what they say and do, makes their recall experience richer. Learn some words in each child's home language that you can use to comment on their favorite activities or materials, as a way of building rapport and vocabulary connections. You may have some children who are reluctant to speak in groups or when adults are present. Accept this, and don't feel pressured to get children to talk.

A computer or mobile app can help maintain children's home language. Once children have the idea about recall time, teachers can use apps that allow a child to draw or import photos of their work and record their voice describing what they did. This will provide a record of their home language expression and development.

• • •

Supporting DDLs with a well-labeled learning environment and with supportive interactions and activities across the daily routine will help children gain confidence in using their first and second languages.

References

Epstein, A.S., & Hohmann, M. (2012). *The HighScope Preschool Curriculum*. Ypsilanti, MI: HighScope Press.



Karen N. Nemeth is an author, consultant, and advocate for early education for children who are dual-language learners. She has written books for teachers, administrators, families, and children on this topic. Karen has leadership roles at the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), the National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE) and Teaching of English for Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Karen presents at many national conferences and consults with organizations, government agencies, and local programs, and she hosts a resource website at www.languagecastle.com.

TRAINER-TO-TRAINER

Supporting Understanding in Any Language

BY KAREN N. NEMETH

The other articles in this issue about teaching young dual-language learners (DLLs) provide the background knowledge regarding the importance of supporting home languages. This article offers strategies for trainers.

It is the job of every teacher to help children learn content in the form of concepts, skills, and vocabulary. When the children speak different languages, making that content understandable becomes a high priority. As the population becomes increasingly diverse, most early childhood educators will need to address this priority. Teachers depend on professional development providers to help them implement new knowledge and strategies with linguistically diverse groups. There is one solution that all trainers can use to update their presentations and writing: the notion of “comprehensible input.”

What Is Comprehensible Input?

Comprehensible input is language that can be understood by listeners even though they may not understand all the vocabulary and grammatical structures in the input. Comprehensible input is a hypothesis first proposed by Stephen Krashen.

Krashen, S. (1981). *Second Language Acquisition and Second Language Learning*. New York: Prentice-Hall. (Available at www.sdkrashen.com)

Trainers should think about the content they are providing and make sure they are not overlooking content that would help teachers working with children who are new to English. For example, when a trainer suggests to teachers that they should “ask the children how the character feels” in a story, the trainer should provide suggestions for how that can happen when some children don’t understand English. Teachers need strategies they can use during planned activities, daily routines, and during free-play time.

Training Strategies

1. Rewrite presentation goals to specify what participants will know and be able to do in the context of a classroom of diverse languages and abilities. For example, instead of saying “Describe what social studies looks like in early childhood settings,” state a goal like this: “Describe what social studies looks like in linguistically and culturally diverse early

childhood settings.” This makes clear that the trainer is ready to answer questions and provide solutions for teachers in diverse environments.

2. Review the content of your presentations and handouts as if you were a teacher learning how to implement these suggestions in a classroom where some of the children don’t understand English. Does any of your content, or do any of your activities or your recommendations exclude some children and, therefore, some teachers? By focusing on ideas for making content more understandable for all, trainers can model a consistent approach that works with any style, specialty, or learning domain.
3. When appropriate, present and have participants practice some of the following dual-language teaching strategies for making content comprehensible to all children in workshop participants’ classrooms:
 - a. In addition to prompting discussion questions, use pictures, sign language, or icons to enhance understanding of the questions across the languages.
 - b. Use visuals to build understanding in meaningful ways. Choose simple photographs or realistic illustrations without confusing details. Realistic photos showing examples from the children’s actual experiences have more meaning than do less relatable representations.
 - c. Use props that add real meaning to the activity or discussion. For example, bringing in some real caterpillars



in a terrarium to help children observe and understand a story about a caterpillar can increase children's learning about how caterpillars behave and what they need to live. Gluing pompoms together to look like a caterpillar does not enhance understanding of a caterpillar's existence.

- d. Choose bilingual books and songs that also add real meaning. Songs that simply include words in other languages do not build understanding, but songs that include actions and functions along with rhythm and repetition can be very helpful.
 - e. Use newly learned words and concepts in multiple contexts throughout the day and throughout the classroom. Suggestions might include creating relevant puzzles and manipulatives to connect with ongoing themes observed in children's play, making video examples available to illustrate topics of discussion, and changing classroom labels often to respond to areas of interest so new words can be included in the home languages of the children (which adults can also include in conversations).
4. Remind participants that children need to hear words explained to them in context and have them connected with words in their home language whenever possible. Children who are DLLs need multiple opportunities to practice and use new words as well. Building pathways of connection from the new vocabulary learned in one context to the vocabulary needed in the next context is an essential strategy for comprehensible input. In other words, if the children have been fascinated by construction going on near the school, teachers might postpone a planned activity about ducklings. Instead, they might find some books that talk about construction work and construction vehicles, put out puzzles with construction themes, and put digger trucks in the sand table to create those pathways of meaning for DLLs as they begin to sort out what word means what and how each word is used.
 5. Make sure your workshops include time for participants to make notes for an implementation plan or outline that pertains to how they will use what they've learned to support DLLs.

...

There are many additional strategies to help teachers meet the unique learning needs of the DLLs in their classrooms, but critical training goals can be met with a clear focus on adapting materials and strategies to make learning understandable and accessible for all children.



2016 HIGHSCOPE® INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

PRECONFERENCE

May 9, 2016 | 9:00 a.m.—4:00 p.m.

Featuring full-day workshops, including:

“Supporting Dual Language Learners in the Classroom”
with Yolanda Orozco

“Scaffolding Infant and Toddler Language Learning Throughout the Daily Routine”
with Shannon Lockhart

“Parents: Children’s First Teachers and Teachers’ Best Allies” with Karalyn Huey

...and many other engaging, informative sessions, including a special seminar for researchers!

...

Space is limited! Register online at:
highscope.org/2016conference

SPECIAL EDUCATION

The Gift of Language

BY TERRI MITCHELL, EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS ADMINISTRATOR, CANYONS SCHOOL DISTRICT, UTAH

What a wonderful gift to speak more than one language! Research continues to support the benefits of learning two languages; however this gift is often misunderstood as an obstacle to young children with disabilities and, even more specifically, to those with language development difficulties. It is important to understand that language is language, whether it is English, Spanish, Urdu, or Korean — it is all language. Learning language, regardless of tongue, is crucial to children's developing communication abilities and an understanding of the world around them. In this article, we will look at strategies for supporting dual-language learners (DLLs), especially those with special needs.



Language Learning, Language Delays

Often times, when a child is learning multiple languages, questions arise as to whether a true disability is present; is it a diagnosable disability or, as is more common, a language difference? It is crucial for adults who support young children's development to understand that it is impossible to have a language disability in one language and not the other. Thus, when English is a child's second language and he scores poorly on a standardized test for language development in English but falls within the typical range in his native language, he would be said to have a language difference, not a disability. Similarly,

the reverse would also be true. If the child showed typical development in the second language but the native language was not well developed, it would still be considered a language difference, not a disability.

It gets more complicated when both languages may be significantly delayed. In this instance, it is important to look at information about the child's development, percentage of time immersed in the native language, and percentage of time immersed in the second language. Total language exposure needs to be analyzed. This includes time with television, day care programs, or other programming provided in the second language. Frequently, when looking at total language, young children learning two languages have more language development overall than do children who are monolingual, even if the separate languages may appear to have delays. Parental concerns, if there are any, are often critical in helping education teams successfully understand and analyze information that will help determine differences versus disabilities.

Enlisting Family Support

Perhaps the most effective support for young children with disabilities who are learning a second language is for their families to continue reinforcing the native language. Parents must continue that initial language development in children's first language. Parents should read to their children, engage children in conversation, and play with children — all in the children's first language. By doing this, language overall will continue to develop. Parents may feel anxious about this, thinking that they should stop speaking their native language with their children. They may feel concerned that continuing the child's first language will negatively impact an existing language delay and the child's ability to understand the second language. Additionally, parents may have concerns related to how their child will "fit in," be understood by others, and engage in social interactions with peers. However, it is imperative that teachers encourage parents to continue speaking and interacting with their children in their native language. This will improve children's language development despite a language delay or disability.

Using HighScope Classroom Supports

As language is the vehicle for communicating and understanding, having a “broken vehicle” requires teachers to provide these supports through a different mode. Visual supports are a key method for supporting young children with special needs, and especially those who are dual-language learners (DLLs).

Visual supports can be defined as photos, clip art, drawings, or real objects. The HighScope Curriculum already defines specific visual supports for young children. Pictures or drawings of components of the daily routine, drawings on the message board, a picture binder for choosing songs, labels for the classroom materials, and labels for the well-defined areas in the learning environment are just the basics used for all children in a HighScope classroom.



Additional visual strategies for DLLs with special needs may include an individual planning board with pictures to choose from for planning time. For example, Angelique, who struggles in communicating plans or ideas for work time, uses an individual planning binder that contains photos and clip art of items found around the classroom in areas that interest her. As she picks an item from the binder, the adult walks her to the area where the item is found and labels it for her. As Angelique’s vocabulary continues to develop, complexity can be added to the binder. First, images of the play areas can be added, then images demonstrating the different materials. The binder could also contain photos of classmates she may choose to play with. Using similar visual supports for all planning and recall activities can help Angelique feel more successful in communicating her plans and ideas.

Transitions can frequently be a difficult time — a time when children do not understand what is expected. Visual supports

relative to the daily routine on an individual level can help young children learn the sequence of what comes next, and frequently give a level of comfort and understanding. For example, Josue repeatedly appears to be lost in the daily routine and stands in the last place he was, such as his small-group-time table, without taking cues from other children and their movements to the next part of the daily routine. Josue is given a small foam board with Velcro at the top, to which a picture of each part of the daily routine is attached, and a small envelope attached on the back. As each part of the daily routine is completed, Josue can take the corresponding picture off and put it in the small envelope so he can see what is next. Adults support him and the other children in moving to the next space. This support can also be provided by a peer partner.

As young children with a second language and special needs begin using more language, whether in their native or their new language, any gestures and/or approximations of words need to be acknowledged and encouraged. As children recognize that their attempts to communicate are accepted, they will continue to take the risk of communicating their needs and wants. Adults will sometimes guess and make missteps during the process of understanding what children are communicating, but once successful communication happens, it is exciting for both children and adults! Adults need to remember that, although it may be difficult and may require problem solving, they are giving young children a gift — the gift of language. Few things in life are more important than this!



Terri Mitchell is a HighScope field consultant and currently serves as the Early Childhood Administrator in Canyons School District in Sandy, Utah. Prior to joining Canyons, Terri was an educational specialist for the Utah Personnel Development Center, where she directed the training initiatives for early childhood special education classrooms across the state of Utah. Terri is a certified teacher in special education and early childhood special education. She has contributed her experience with instructional coaching, assessment, and systems change to the development of several high-quality early childhood programs. She co-authored the book *I Belong: Active Learning For Children With Special Needs* (HighScope Press).

ASK US

I have a classroom with three new children, all of whom speak the same language at home. They tend to play together and only rarely initiate activity with other children. How can I help them get past what seems to be a language barrier and get them interacting with others in the classroom during work time?

– A Preschool Teacher

It can be easy for children with the same home language to stick together — a tendency we can all identify with from times we've been one of the “newbies” in a situation. There are several strategies you can use to try to get children more integrated into the classroom during work time:

1. Play in parallel with children, and when invited to join the play scenario, ask if other children may join as well, or simply include the onlookers in the play if they seem interested and it seems natural for all parties.
2. Ask children to teach you some of the words they are using from their home language; share these words with other children in the class at another time in the daily routine. Also ask family members to provide you with words that are related to the type of play the children typically gravitate toward — use both English and the second language while playing with DLL children so that they are aware that they don't have to speak English only to play with English speakers and so English speakers are aware that they can use a few words in the DLL children's language.
3. During group times, talk about whole-class experiences, and if you have taken a field trip, take out a picture book of photos and invite all children to share about their experiences. Label objects and people in pictures and photos in both languages.
4. During message board, use symbols as well as words from each of the languages children speak, to get children more interested in the diversity of the classroom.
5. During story time, tell stories and read books that include words from other languages and describe features of other cultures. Act out parts and gesture for meaning during book reading and storytelling. You could also invite a family member to read a story in his or her home language while class members act out parts and use gestures to solidify meaning throughout the experience.

By embracing children's languages and backgrounds, you will see children start to feel safe interacting with others as they also strengthen their skills in their home language. Children who do not speak that same second language will also see that you are playing with DLL children and using their words when you can. This models exactly what you are trying to accomplish.



Free Membership Delivers

- *Extensions* e-newsletter for teachers
- *ReSource for Educators* magazine
- Web Clips – Videos of the HighScope approach in action

Join Now! highscope.org/membership

NEWS BRIEFS



Brenda Leger to Join HighScope

HighScope is pleased to welcome Brenda Leger as the foundation's new Chief Strategy Officer. She will be responsible for the planning, development, and implementation of strategic initiatives to generate

revenue in new and existing markets and to expand HighScope's customer base for products and services.

Brenda has served as National Early Childhood Consultant at Kaplan School Supply Company in Lewisville, NC; as National Director of Early Learning and Online Curriculum at Scholastic in New York; and as National Director of Sales and Content at Teaching Strategies in Bethesda, MD. She also has experience as a childcare worker and pre-K and kindergarten teacher, site director, and staff trainer. She received her master's degree in early childhood special education from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

Brenda says she is delighted to be part of the HighScope team. "The legacy and 'call to arms' of quality early childhood education started with HighScope," she said.

Register Now for Online Courses Starting in April

HighScope has fostered excellence through teacher training for more than 40 years. You can access this expertise from the comfort of your home with convenient and cost-effective online courses such as these: Creating Meaningful Lesson Plans; Planning and Recall: Why and How; Scaffolding Children's Learning at Small-Group Time; Making Your Workshops Active and Engaging; and many more! Learning takes place within an interactive community of teachers, caregivers, and trainers. Share insights into HighScope's curriculum and teaching methods in dialogue with fellow educators from around the world and get individualized attention from our expert instructors. Learn more or register at highscope.org/onlinelearning.

Rediscover *Essentials* — Now Available in e-Book

Our new E-BOOK versions of *Essentials of Active Learning in Preschool*, Second Edition, bring you HighScope's recognized, validated research and teaching techniques in an intuitive, digital format. Now, explore HighScope's proven curriculum enhanced with an interactive, searchable format; video links to view our proven teaching techniques in action; and the convenience of reading on multiple mobile devices. Also coming soon in Spanish. For more details, search *Essentials* in the online store at highscope.org.



New Infant-Toddler Program Quality Assessment Online Course Offered

This all new online workshop provides hands-on experience in observing, recording, and evaluating program quality using HighScope's Infant-Toddler Program Quality Assessment (PQA) instrument. Participants will get hands-on practice in completing PQA items and will receive detailed feedback on the accuracy of their completed PQAs from the course facilitator. Course begins March 28 — learn more at highscope.org/onlinelearning.



Annual HighScope International Conference in Detroit May 9–12

The **2016 HighScope International Conference** will be held at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center in Detroit. This year's conference — Striving for Excellence and Equity in Early Learning — will highlight early education's promise as a means of creating meaningful social, emotional, and intellectual opportunities for young children.

Conference activities will begin on Tuesday, May 10, with a keynote opening address presented by Dr. Walter S. Gilliam, the Director of The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy. Participants can then attend their choice of more than 90 workshops on a variety of topics, discussions, and events. The conference concludes at noon on Thursday, May 12.

Registration for preconference sessions is now open. The preconference will give you unique access to networking opportunities and a choice of in-depth workshops, which are scheduled for Monday, May 9. A special research symposium for researchers will also be offered: Closing the Opportunity Gap — Research and Community Efforts to Promote Children's Language-Rich Environment.

Stay up to date with all the latest information on conference sessions and events by visiting our website at highscope.org/2016conference.

Look for us at these other upcoming conferences!

March 31–April 2: CAEYC, Pasadena, CA

March 31–April 2: MiAEYC, Grand Rapids, MI

April 13–15: Young Child Expo, New York City, NY

May 16–20: National Head Start, Nashville, TN