



# SUPPORTING THE LANGUAGE AND LITERACY DEVELOPMENT OF BILINGUAL CHILDREN

Xigríd Soto-Boykin, Ph.D., CCC-SLP

# Today's Objectives:

## **BILINGUALISM BASICS:**

- Identify common myths related to bilingualism
- Define the different terms associated with bilingualism

## **PERCEPTIONS OF BILINGUALISM:**

- Self-reflect on one's perceptions of bilingualism

## **BEST PRACTICES FOR BILINGUAL INSTRUCTION:**

- Describe the recommended practices for working with bilingual children
- Explain how a monolingual educator can support the bilingual needs of children
- Provide examples of ways to support children's bilingual language and literacy development

## **CULTURALLY SUSTAINING/RESPONSIVE TEACHING:**

- Define culturally sustaining teaching & provide examples of how to do this in your classroom

# BILINGUALISM BASICS

# Fact or Myth?

It is better for bilingual children to only work on their English skills because they will only receive English-only instruction in Kindergarten.

Myth!



# Fact or Myth?

---

Young bilingual children have one language system that become more separated as they get older.

Fact!

# Fact or Myth?

---

Children receiving bilingual instruction tend to outperform children who only receive English-instruction.

Fact!

# Fact or Myth?

---

I can't help children develop their bilingual skills unless I am also bilingual.

Myth!

# Addressing common misconceptions about bilingualism

Bilingualism is the norm,  
not the exception

Being bilingual does not  
cause academic risk or  
language delay

Supporting children's  
home language helps  
maintain stronger familial  
connections and supports  
their academic success

Children with significant  
disabilities can still be  
bilingual

# Defining bilingualism

---

Dual Language  
Learner

English Learner

Bilingual/  
Multilingual

Home Language

# Types of bilinguals

---



**Simultaneous**



**Sequential**



**Receptive**

# Advantages of Bilingualism



INCREASED  
EXECUTIVE  
FUNCTIONING AND  
DECISION-MAKING



MORE JOB  
OPPORTUNITIES  
AND BETTER PAY



CONNECTION TO  
CULTURE AND  
FAMILY



WIDER REACH  
ACROSS DIFFERENT  
COUNTRIES



DELAYED ONSET OF  
ALZHEIMER'S,  
DEMENTIA, AND  
OTHER  
NEUROLOGICAL  
DISORDERS

---

**Pretend you are talking to a parent who would like to have her child be bilingual but is not sure if there is an advantage of being bilingual.**

**What can you tell the parent to help them know that there are advantages to being bilingual?**







Questions?

# PERCEPTIONS OF BILINGUALISM

# Bilingualism in the United States

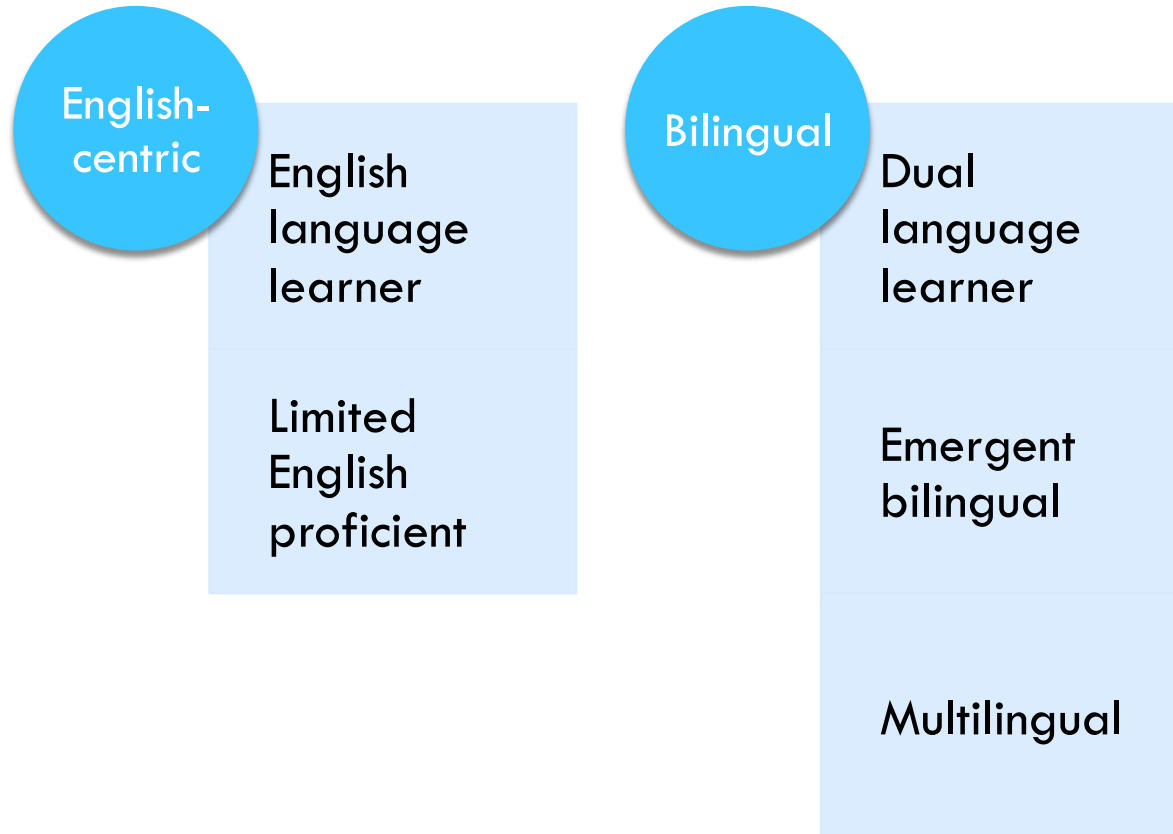


What language is more valued in the United States?

Whose language is seen as representing the language of achievement and prestige?

# Perceptions Impact Approach

- What is your goal when working with bilingual children?



# What are your perceptions of bilingualism?

1

Children who are bilingual or who speak a language other than English are at-risk for academic failure. We need to provide them with English-only instruction to succeed.

2

It's important to support children's home language so they can learn English successfully.

3

I feel it's important to support bilingualism, but because I do not speak the children's home language, there is nothing I can really do.

4

I will support children's bilingual language and literacy development because being bilingual is valuable.



Questions?

RECOMMENDED PRACTICES  
FOR PROMOTING THE  
LANGUAGE AND LITERACY  
SKILLS OF BILINGUAL  
CHILDREN

# Recommended practices for children who are bilingual

- When appropriate, assess children in both languages\*
- Provide children with bilingual instruction
- Incorporate children's home language when delivering instruction to English
- Support children's language learning **AND** their understanding of academic concepts

Reading and understanding text about photosynthesis

Listening and speaking skills

-Comprehension of wh-questions

-Vocabulary

-Sentence formulation





# What general strategies help bilingual children?

- Incorporate children's home language
- Provide small group instruction
- Teach vocabulary using gestures and visuals
- Act things out using dramatization and story props
- Provide explicit instruction and provide children with multiple response opportunities
  - Accept non-verbal responses
- Apply language scaffolding techniques:
  - Reduce your rate of speech
  - Model sentences and have children repeat them back to you
  - Expand what the child says

[Find resource here!](#)

# Model sentences for child

## Modeling:

(1) Say what you want the child to say.

(2) Ask the child to **repeat** after you.



This is a **ball**. Say **ball**.

Esto es una **pelota**. Di **pelota**.



**ball**

**pelota**

Modeling works great when child is learning a concept or word for the first time!

# Expand what the child says

## Expansion

(1) **Repeat** what the child says.

(2) **Add** extra information.



I like that ball!

Me gusta esa pelota

Yes, you like the green ball!

¡Sí, te gusta la pelota verde!

Expansion helps you build on what the child already knows!



# Main thing to avoid...

---



**..direct, word-for-word, translations  
from English to the other language!**


# Main guiding question...

- How am I supporting children's bilingual speaking and listening to set the strongest foundation for their learning in **ALL THEIR** languages?

What is the learning goal for the student?

What does reaching this goal look like in English?

What does reaching this goal look like in the child's other language(s)?



This might look different based on the language

---

**Reflect on your usual approach to working with bilingual children when you do not speak their home language.**

- **What are some things you feel confident you are doing well?**
- **What are some areas you want to improve upon?**





Questions?

WHAT CAN I DO AS AN  
EDUCATOR WHEN I CANNOT  
SPEAK THE CHILDREN'S HOME  
LANGUAGE?



# When you do not speak the children's home language...

- Conduct a home language use survey
- Work with an interpreter, colleague, and/or community member who speaks the language
- Learn about the home language
- Embed the home language into your instruction
- Identify family's traditions and culture and incorporate them into your lessons
- Involve the children's caregivers

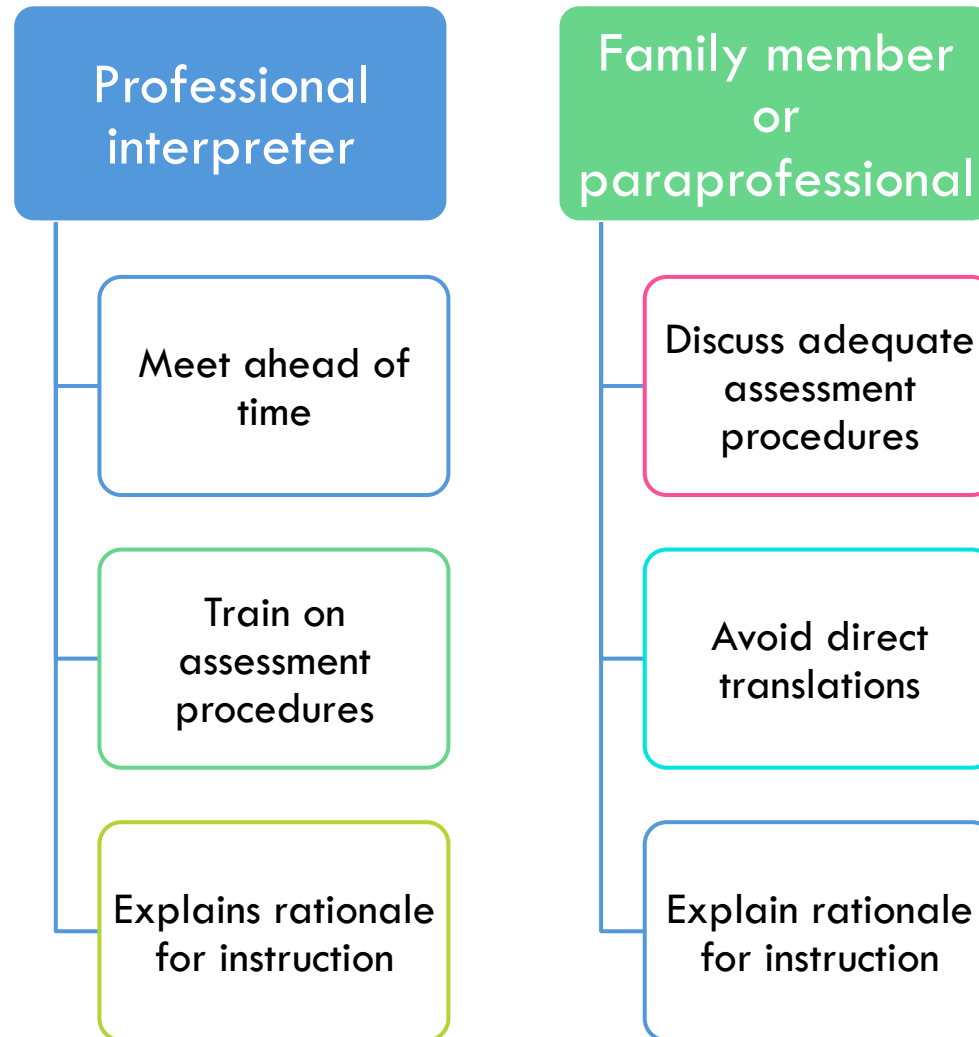
# Home Language Survey (HLS)

- What is a HLS?
- Why is it important?
- How can I use it?
- Examples:
  - Teaching Strategies
  - Chicago Public Schools
  - NY HLS in Hmong

## Sample Questions:

1. *What language(s) does your child speak at home?*
2. *What language(s) is your child exposed to at home?*
3. *What language(s) do you all speak to your child most frequently?*
4. *What language(s) is your child most comfortable speaking at home?*
5. *What language(s) are the adults in the home most comfortable speaking?*

# Working with interpreters/family members



# Learn About the Home Language

- Why is it important?
- How can I learn about the home language?
- How can I use it?

English	Language A
<b>Sounds in the language</b>	
<b>Sentence structure</b>	
<b>Word Structure</b>	
<b>How is reading learned?</b>	

# How can you learn about the home language?

- Conduct a **contrastive language analysis**:

- Google “English AND [other language] contrastive analysis” or “English AND [other language] linguistic contrast]

- [Resource on different languages](#)

## Questions:

1. What sounds are shared and which are different across the languages?
2. How are words formed in each language?
3. What is the number of syllables that words have in each language?
4. How are sentences formed in each language?  
(example: subject-verb-object)



# Hmong

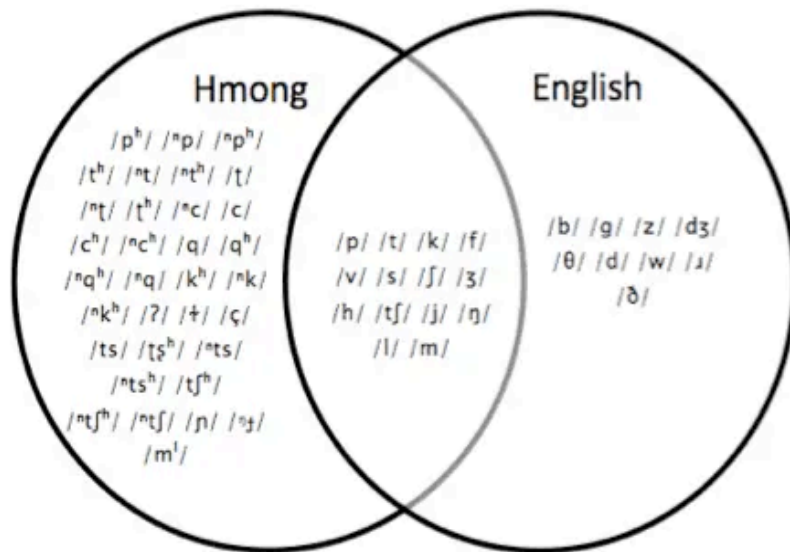


- **7 tones**
- **Varieties of Hmong:**  
White Hmong; Green Hmong

[Learn more here!](#)

# Hmong vs. English Sounds

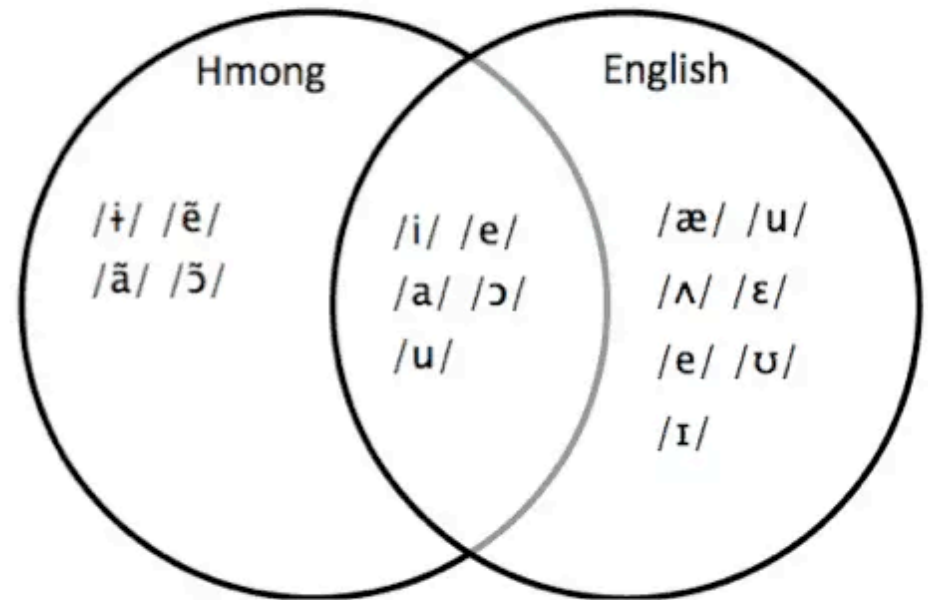
## Consonant Phonemes



**BILINGUISTICS**

Copyright 2017, Bilinguistics, Inc.

## Vowels



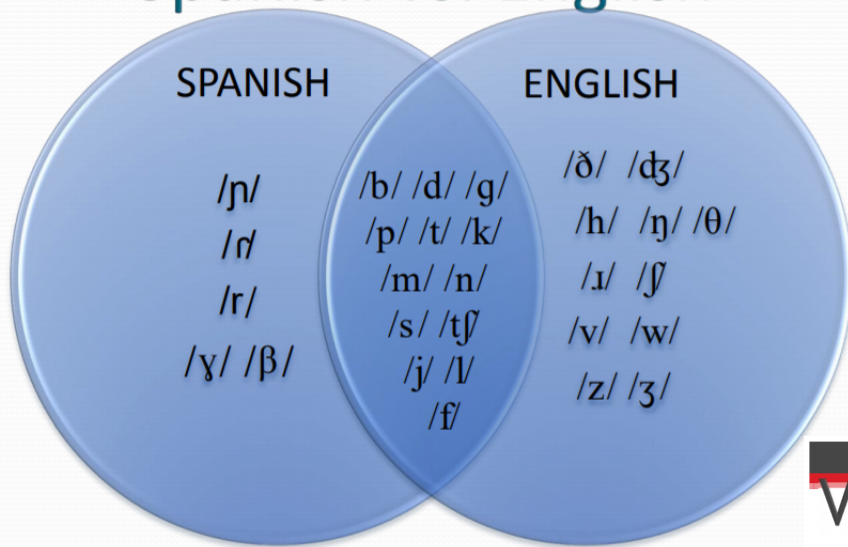
**BILINGUISTICS**

Copyright 2017, Bilinguistics, Inc.

	English	Hmong
<b>Sentence structure</b>	Subject-verb-object; time-ordered	No pronoun markers; nouns go before the adjective (cat yellow); verbs not modified for tense
<b>Syllable structure</b>	Mostly one-word syllables; also have 2-3 syllable words; some 4 syllables	4 syllable patterns (CV, V, CCV, CCCV); all words have 1 syllable; no final consonants; complex initial clusters
<b>Word Structure</b>	Prefixes and suffixes; inflectional endings mark tense (-ed, ing, etc.)	Every syllable is its own word
<b>Transparency of orthography</b>	Opaque	Transparent
<b>How is reading learned?</b>	Sound-level awareness (phonemic awareness) is most important for reading	Learning 7 tones; blending of letter-sounds in syllable (first pronounce vowel, then blend initial sound)

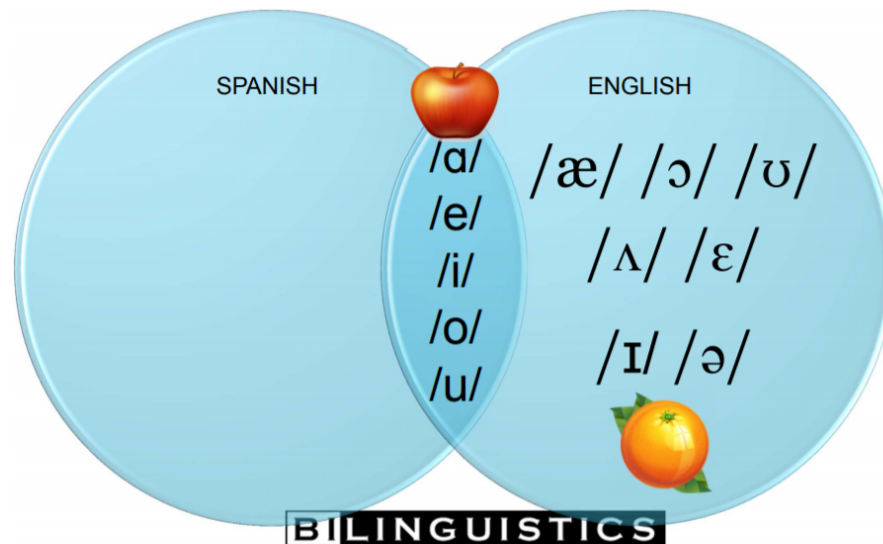


# Phonetic Inventories: Spanish vs. English



**BILINGUISTICS**

## Vowel Inventory



**BILINGUISTICS**

<b>Language Feature</b>	<b>English</b>	<b>Spanish</b>
<b>Syntax (grammar, word order)</b>	Subject-verb-object; time-ordered	Can omit subject; flexible word order
<b>Phonology</b>	14 vowel sounds; many final consonants	5 vowel sounds; limited final consonants
<b>Vocabulary/ Morphology</b>	No gender nouns; 8 inflectional endings (-ing, -s, -ed, etc.); mostly monosyllabic words	Gender nouns; words are highly inflected; mostly multisyllabic words
<b>Phonological awareness</b>	Phonemic awareness most important for reading	Syllable awareness more important for reading
<b>Orthography</b>	Less transparent	More transparent

---

**Describe how you can learn more about languages that you do not speak.**

**-How would learning more about other languages help improve your instruction of children who are bilingual?**





Questions?

# Embedding the Home Language in Literacy Instruction


# Main guiding question...

- How am I supporting children's bilingual speaking and listening to set the strongest foundation for their learning in **ALL THEIR** languages?

What is the learning goal for the student?

What does reaching this goal look like in English?

What does reaching this goal look like in the child's other language(s)?



This might look different based on the language

# Spanish-English PA Example

What is the learning goal for the student?

To have child master PA skills necessary for reading

What does reaching this goal look like in English?

Skills:

- rhyming
- blending and segmenting of compound; 2-3 syllable words
- first part of 2-3 syllable words
- onset-rime
- initial sound id.

What does reaching this goal look like Spanish?

Skills:

- blending and segmenting of 2-3 syllable words
- first parts of 2-3 syllable words

# Example of promoting bilingual children's phonological awareness skills

**English:** “The word *baby* has two parts: “bay-bee.” Let’s say it together: “bay-bee.” It’s your turn now: “What are the smallest parts of the word *candy*?”

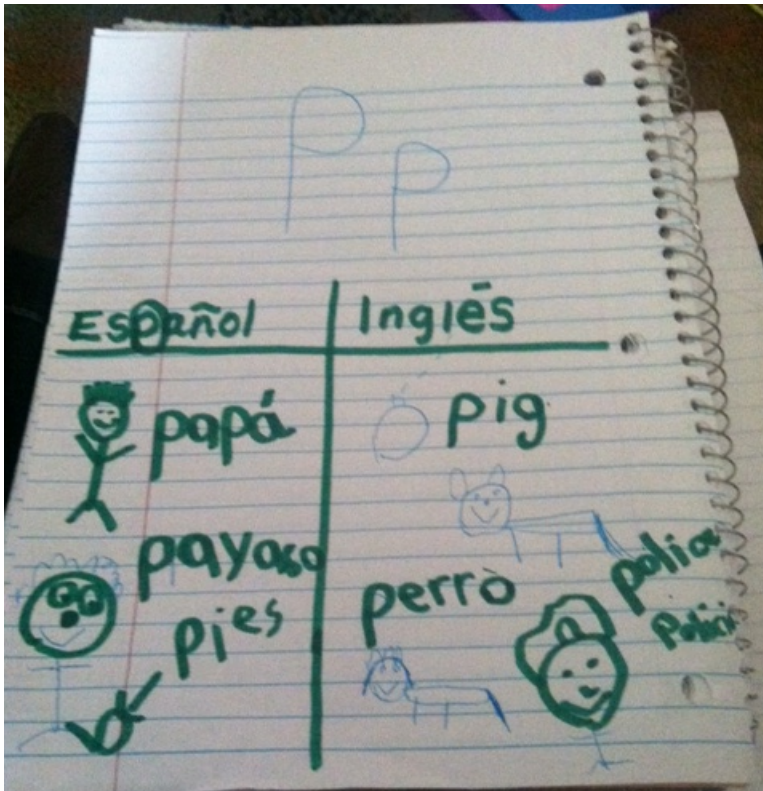
**Spanish:** “Now let’s practice with some Spanish words. In Spanish, *baby* is *bebé*. What are the smallest parts of *bebé*?”



Look up a basic list of words in the home language that match the number of syllables you are targeting in English. Have interpreter or parents say the words in the home language or use Google translates pronunciation feature to say the words.



# Examples of promoting children's bilingual alphabet knowledge skills



**Alphabetic  
Teaching**

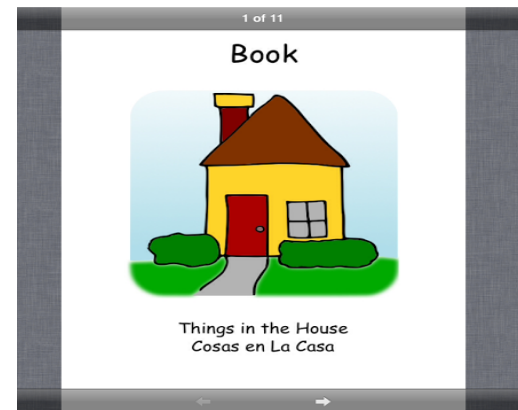
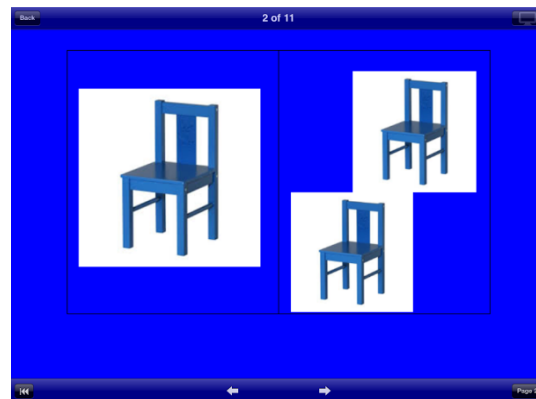
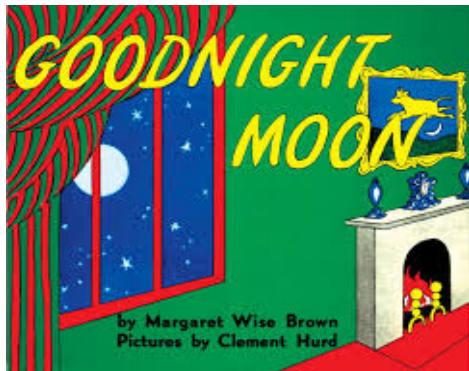
This is the letter B. In English, B makes the sound /b/.

In Spanish, the letter B also make the sounds /b/.

Find which letters in English make the same or similar sound in the child's home language. Focus on those first. Ask native speaker of home language for help.



# Examples of how to promote children's bilingual oral language skills



Pick books available in other languages, send home materials to support instruction happening in the classroom at home.

[Resources](#)

# Examples of how to promote bilingual children's **vocabulary**

If possible, focus on **cognates**: words that are spelled the same/ similarly in both languages

## **Examples:**

- police/policía
- enormous/enorme
- gigantic/gigante
- calm/calmado

Child-friendly definitions

Tier 2 vocabulary

Multiple examples and exposures

Use visuals



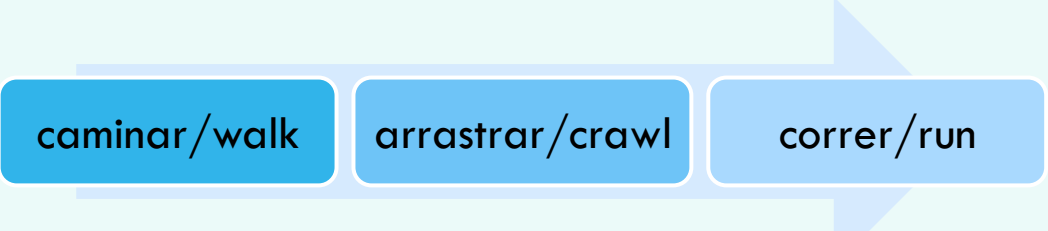
**Look up list of cognates; ask family/ Paraprofessionals; Play Google Translate pronunciation**

[Resource!](#)

**Spanish:**  
arrastrar  
**English:**  
crawl

# Vocabulary Teaching Example

(Gutierrez-Clellen et al., 2014)

Strategy	Spanish	English
Student-friendly definition	Arrastrar es mover el cuerpo lentamente por el suelo.	Crawl means to move slowly with your body close to the ground.
Multiple exemplars	Tengo una serpiente y un oso. ¿Cuál de ellos se arrastra?	At home, my dog has to crawl through the doggie door to go outside. Do you have pets that crawl?
Breadth and depth		

# Examples for Teaching Main Idea and Inference to DLLs

Explicit Instruction

Guided Practice

Help child build  
connections

Mediated Learning  
Experience  
Approach

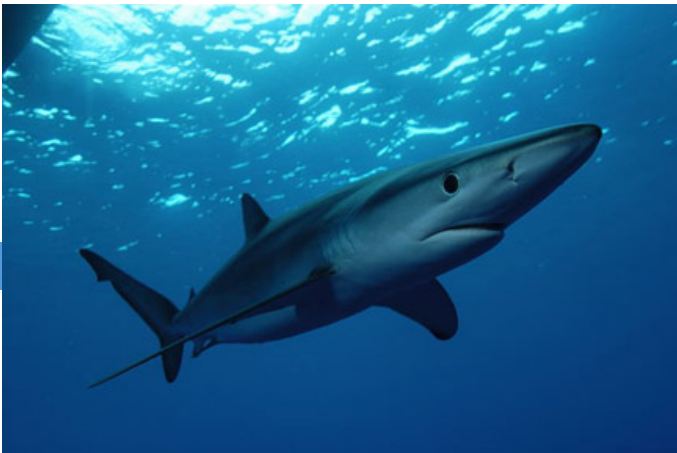
Supplement  
instruction with  
visuals

# Mediated learning experience approach

(Gutierrez-Clellen & Peña, 2001)

Strategy	Definition	Example
<b>Intentionality</b>	Interventionist explicitly states what the intended skill being targeted.	“Today we’re going to find the main idea in this story. The main idea is what the story is mostly about.”
<b>Meaning</b>	Interventionist states the value of the skill being targeted.	“The main idea helps us understand the most important part of the story.”
<b>Transcendence</b>	Interventionist makes the explicit point that the skill will be used in another context.	“We can also find the main idea when we read another story next week.”
<b>Competence</b>	Interventionist provides reinforcements to encourage children to use skill in unfamiliar or novel task.	“Excellent. At first, you only gave me a small part of the story, and now you’re telling me the main idea, the most important part.”





Concrete, non-text example of task

Reading

### Find the Main Idea

Find the main idea in the paragraph below. Write the main idea in your own words in the space provided. Then, write a concluding sentence for this paragraph.



You probably know sharks have very sharp teeth, but did you know they never run out of them? If a shark loses a tooth, another moves forward from within the shark's jaw, where it keeps a nearly unlimited supply of replacement teeth. This way, it's almost impossible for a shark to end up without a full set of teeth. This is a phenomenon unique to the shark. No other animal in the world has teeth quite like the shark's. A shark can go through as many as 20,000 teeth in its lifetime!

Main idea:

---

---

Concluding sentence:

---

---



Practice in short format

Example of main idea instruction sequence

**What is a shark?**

Sharks are fish that live in seas and oceans across the world. Some sharks are tiny, others are giants. Some are gentle and some are fierce.

Sharks don't have bones. Their skeletons are made from light, stretchy cartilage.

There are hundreds of kinds of sharks. Here are just three of them.

**Wobbegongs** hide on the ocean floor. They are well camouflaged.

**Dogfish** have long, slim bodies to slip through the water.

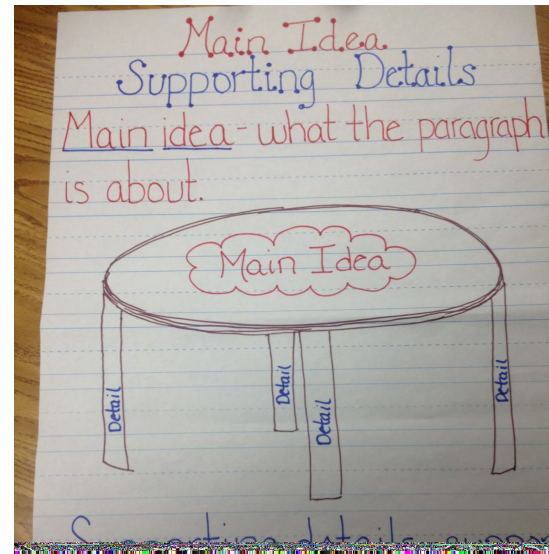
**Angel sharks** have flat bodies. They also hide on the ocean floor.

**DiscoveryFact™**  
Sharks have been living on Earth for 400 million years. They were around at the time of the dinosaurs.

Labels: fins, tail, jaws, gills

Sharks breathe through slits called gills.

Practice in academic text or story



Important to supplement with visuals/graphic organizer



Include paraprofessionals to use texts and stories in the home language



Questions?



# Culturally Sustaining/Responsive Teaching

# Guiding Questions...

What identities and cultures are set as the “norm” your classrooms?

Whose stories, traditions, and narratives, are celebrated?

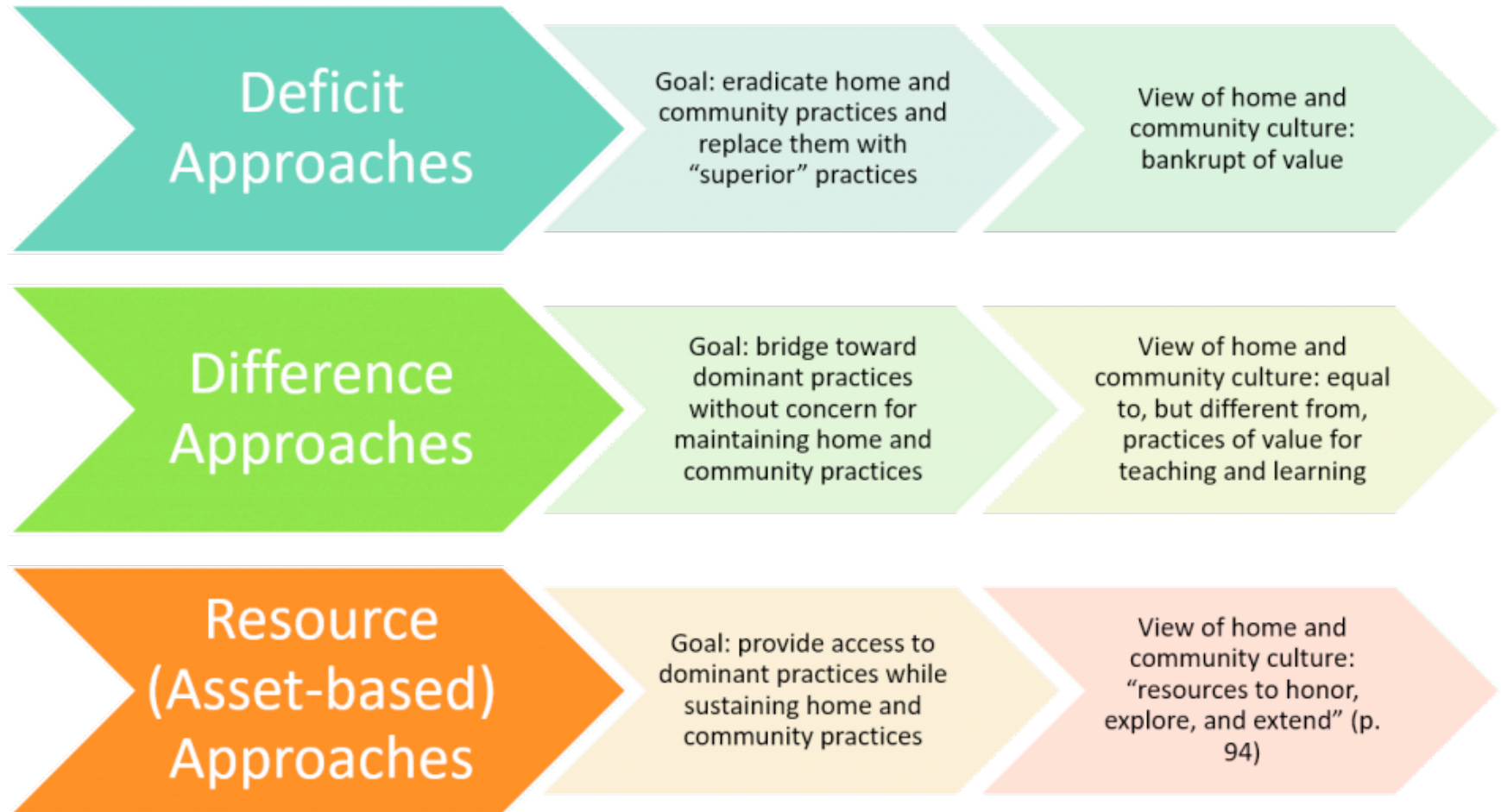
Whose stories, traditions, and narratives are omitted?

# Culturally Sustaining/Responsive Teaching

Definition: “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them.” (Geneva Gay)

[Resource](#)

# Culturally Sustaining/Responsive Teaching



Based on Paris, D. (2012). Culturally sustaining pedagogy: A needed change in stance, terminology, and practice. *Educational Researcher*, 41(3), 93–97. Retrieved from: <https://ready.web.unc.edu/section-2-transforming-practice/module-17/>

# Five Principles of Culturally Sustaining Teaching

Activate students' prior knowledge

Make learning contextual

Embed children's cultural capita

Conduct an inventory of your classroom library

Build positive relationships with children and caregivers

Pronounce ELs' names correctly.



Refrain from substituting EL's first name with an English nickname.



Invite ELs to use their home languages.



Read books with characters who share ELs' experiences.



Expect ELs to engage in the same learning experience and learn the same content as non-ELs.



# 10 Things Culturally Responsive Teachers Do

Encourage ELs to share the connections between their lives the topic.



Have ELs work with non-ELs.



Explicitly teach students how to respectfully collaborate.



Uses ELs' experiences to activate prior knowledge.



Permit ELs to process content in their home languages in addition to using English resources.



@TanEllclassroom

Retrieved from: <https://rpscurriculumandinstruction.weebly.com/tools-tips--tricks/category/all/>

# Creating a classroom that fosters bilingualism & multiculturalism

- Select books with diverse characters that represent the backgrounds and experiences of your students
  - <https://diversebookfinder.org/books/>
  - [Book selection guide](#)
- Introduce themes, activities, and stories that are relevant and personal to the students in your classroom.
  - Conduct family surveys/interviews to identify family's interests
- Explicitly talk about the benefits and value of bilingualism/multilingualism
  - [Resources for fostering bilingualism](#)



# Example of cultural and linguistic representation in books and lessons

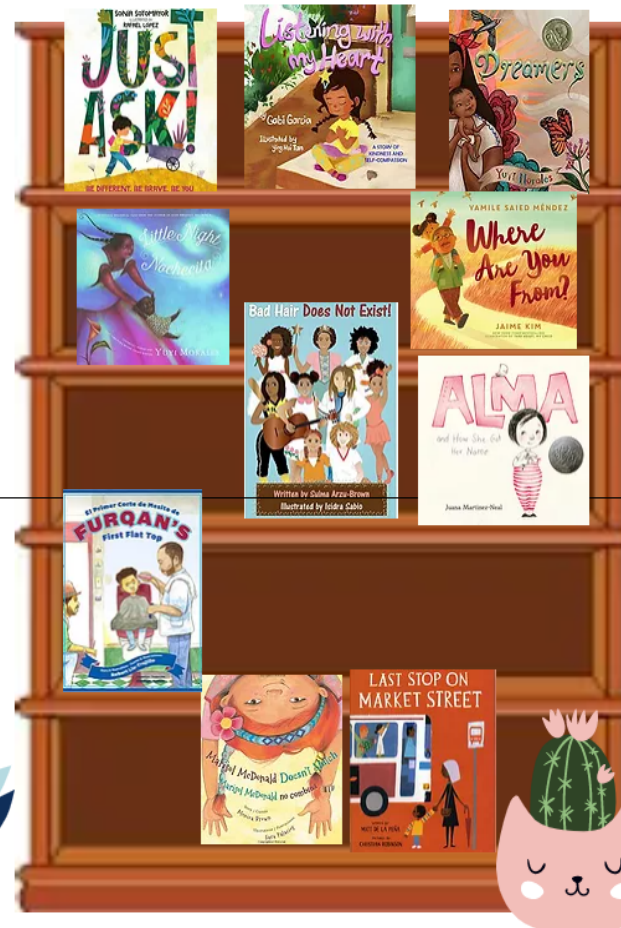
LOS LIBROS EN YOUTUBE

👉 Seleccione un libro



FIND BOOKS ON YOUTUBE

👉 Choose a book



Book themes:

- Identity & culture
- Names
- Disabilities
- Self-love
- Being different
- Immigration
- Colorism

[Find resource here!](#)



# Guide for book selection



## Bilingual Book Selection Guide for Preschoolers

Book:  
Author:  
Publisher:

Book has a parallel version in the other language?

Yes  No

### General Book Selection Guidelines

<b>Language(s)</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> English <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish <input type="checkbox"/> Both languages <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<b>Attractiveness</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Book has appealing images and colors that are age-appropriate
<b>Genre</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Narrative <input type="checkbox"/> Expository
<b>If narrative...</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Story contains familiar topic or a topic that many children in preschool might experience <input type="checkbox"/> Story has a clear initiating event, a problem, character feelings, and a resolution <input type="checkbox"/> Story contains sufficient context to generate a discussion around the books <input type="checkbox"/> Story contains challenging words (e.g., enormous, interesting, gigantic) that children will benefit from learning
<b>If expository....</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Text contains expository structure (such as main idea and details, cause and effect, compare and contrast, problem and solution, sequence) <input type="checkbox"/> Topic explained using simple sentences appropriate for preschoolers
<b>Vocabulary</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Book teaches 2-4 challenging, Tier 2 words that have high utility for children (meaning words that child can use across different contexts like enormous, beautiful, gigantic, etc.)
<b>Number of sentences per page and number of pages in book</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Book does not exceed more than 6 lines per page (per language) <input type="checkbox"/> Book has no more than 20-26 pages

1 | Soto, Xigrid (2020)

### Specific to Bilingual Books/Books in language other than English

<b>If book is bilingual...</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Other language adaptation is accurate and contains language that is appropriate for preschoolers <input type="checkbox"/> Both versions of text make sense and contain challenging vocabulary in English and the other language (words to teach do not have to be the same in both language)
<b>Cultural Appropriateness</b> <small>(adapted from ECLK's, "Selecting and Using Culturally Responsive Children's Books" guide)</small>	<input type="checkbox"/> Content and illustrations provide authentic depiction of culture (e.g., if story happens in modern times, characters dress and talk as they do presently) <input type="checkbox"/> Book does not reinforce stereotypes <input type="checkbox"/> Book has a message that depicts individuals in a positive light <input type="checkbox"/> Book uses dialects appropriately and respectfully <input type="checkbox"/> Does not use a culture/ethnicity as an object to be counted (e.g., "10 little Indians", or "I is inuit") <input type="checkbox"/> Does not rely on a man or an European American character to be the rescuer <input type="checkbox"/> Characters do not have exaggerated physical attributes <input type="checkbox"/> Mexican Americans (or another group) not depicted to represent all Latinos <input type="checkbox"/> Characters are not dressing up as another cultural group
<b>Description of Books' Instructional Purpose</b> <small>(adapted from Spencer, Lear, Sevens, &amp; Brown, 2017, STORYBOOK PHONE SYSTEM)</small>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Narrative Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Comprehension <input type="checkbox"/> Cultural representation	<input type="checkbox"/> Alphabet Knowledge/Phonological Awareness <input type="checkbox"/> Feelings/Social Skills <input type="checkbox"/> Academic content (science, math, social studies)

2 | Soto, Xigrid (2020)



“BILINGUALISM IS THE STORY OF THOSE WHOSE WORLDS HAVE INTERACTED WITH OTHERS. IT IS THE SUM OF OUR TONGUES AND HISTORY. BILINGUALISM IS A TESTAMENT TO OUR RESILIENCE. BILINGUALISM IS JOY, IT IS BELONGING, IT IS STRENGTH. BILINGUALISM-THE ONE WHOSE ACCENT I USED TO RESENT-IS NOW THE MOST BEAUTIFUL OF SONGS FOR ME.”



---

**Reflect on the types of books you are using in your classrooms.**

- What are the kinds of characters depicted in the books?**
- Which group of people are being recognized?**
- Which group of people are being excluded?**
- What can you do to expand the types of stories and characters you are using in your classroom?**





## Resources

[www.illinoisearlylearning.org](http://www.illinoisearlylearning.org)



[www.colorincolorado.org](http://www.colorincolorado.org)



[www.cuentosinteractivos.org](http://www.cuentosinteractivos.org)



[www.growingupbilingual.com](http://www.growingupbilingual.com)



[www.bilingualistics.com](http://www.bilingualistics.com)



[www.habladdll.org](http://www.habladdll.org)



Questions?



Xigríd Soto-Boykin, Ph.D., CCC-SLP  
xigrídsoto@ku.edu  
habladll.org