Learning Words for Life: Promoting Vocabulary Development in Dual Language Learners

Cristina Gillanders, PhD
University of Colorado Denver
Let’s us gather in a flourishing way

Let us gather in a flourishing way
with sunluz grains abriendo los cantos
que cargamos cada día
en el joven pasto nuestro cuerpo
para regalar y dar feliz perlas pearls
of corn flowing árboles de vida en las cuatro esquinas
let us gather in a flourishing way
carpeditos llenos de fuerza to vida
giving nacimientos to fragrant ríos
dulces frescos verdes turquoise strong
carne de nuestros hijos rainbows
let us gather in a flourishing way
en la luz y en la carne of our heart to toil
delitos in fields of blossoms
juntos to stretch los brazos
tranquilos with the rain en la mañana
temprana estrella on our forehead
cielo de calor and wisdom to meet us
where we toil siempre
in the garden of our struggle and joy
let us offer our hearts a saludar our águila rising
freedom
a celebrar woven brazos branches ramas
piedras nopales plumas piercing bursting
figs and aguacates
ripe mariposa fields and mares claros
of our face
to breathe todos en el camino blessing
seeds to give to grow maiztlán
en las manos de nuestro amor
Importance of Vocabulary

• Most of western schooling is done through words
• Knowledge of words is highly related to reading comprehension
• Children demonstrate and are tested their knowledge in school when they use the appropriate vocabulary
Vocabulary Development in DLLs

• Spanish and English vocabularies in preschool predict reading skills in first and later grades (Rinaldi & Paez, 2008)
• Spanish vocabulary development appears to predict English phonological awareness (Anthony et al., 2009)
• Below average receptive vocabulary development in the first language (L1) have been found to hinder cross-linguistic transfer of phonological awareness skills (Atwill, Blanchard, Christie, Gorin, & García, 2010).
• Mancilla-Martinez and Lesaux (2010, 2011) report that vocabulary and syntactic abilities in English and Spanish measured annually explained variations in reading comprehension by fifth grade
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brobdingnagian</td>
<td>• Of huge size, gigantic, tremendous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pandiculation</td>
<td>• Stretching or yawing before going to bed and after waking up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brumal</td>
<td>• Of or characteristic of winter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Complexity of Learning New Words
*(Nagy & Scott, 2000)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Incremental</th>
<th>First incomplete</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Polysemy</td>
<td>Multiple meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multidimensionality</td>
<td>Multiple forms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interrelatedness</td>
<td>Words are all connected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Importance of teacher talk

• Preschool teachers’ use of sophisticated vocabulary predicted fourth grade reading comprehension and word recognition (Dickinson & Porche, 2011).

• Number and variety of words used by preschool teachers predicts DLLs’ vocabulary skills (Aukrust, 2007; Bowers & Vasilyeva, 2011).
What we usually find in the classroom

Wright (2012) found that kindergarten teachers discussed the meaning of words on average only 8.14 times per day and that these discussions were brief and intermittent.
Reading Aloud to Dual Language Learners
Benefits of Reading Aloud

Children learn vocabulary

(a) supports comprehension of words that children decode,
(b) helps children more rapidly recognize words they are decoding,
(c) fosters phonological awareness skills that also support reading, and
(d) increases children’s understanding of teachers’ instruction in reading and other areas (National Early Literacy Panel, 2008).
Benefits of Reading Aloud

• Offers the opportunity to learn words not part of everyday conversations
• Multiple exposures
• Meaningful and motivating context
• Springboard for discussion or dramatic play
(Wasik, Hindman & Snell, 2016)
Promoting vocabulary development in DLLs

- Requires a combination of direct teaching and learning words in everyday routines
- Take advantage of knowledge of the word in the first language
- Multiple opportunities for actively listening and using words in different contexts
- Consideration to children’s English language acquisition
- Make explicit connections with children’s sociocultural experiences
Reading Aloud to Dual Language Learners
# Maximize Comprehension

- Introduce the book in a picture walk
- Select a limited set of core words (3 to 5) per week
- Use the children’s L1 strategically
- Read the story several times during the week
- Incorporate culturally relevant thematic units and books
## Maximizing Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be aware of DLLs second language acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encourage DLLs to retell and/or to dramatize the story</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expand the ideas in the book to other centers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teach core vocabulary words in small groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
An example of a reading aloud session
What did you see?
Pause and Reflect

- Explicit teaching and learning words in everyday routines?
- Strategic use of the first language?
- Multiple opportunities for actively listening and using words in different contexts?
- Consideration to children’s English language acquisition?
- Explicit connections with children’s sociocultural experiences?
- Were the children engaged?
An example of a small group
What did you see?

- Questions to expand DLLs understanding of the word?
- Children repeating the word aloud?
- A child-friendly definition of the word?
- Examples of the word in different contexts?
- Opportunities for children to demonstrate their understanding of the word?

(Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002)
Making explicit connections with children’s sociocultural experiences

Children learn vocabulary best when words are embedded in a meaningful context

– What does this child already know?
– Who is this child? Who is his/her family?
– What are the child’s interests?
– What are the family routines?
– What are the family’s funds of knowledge?
Funds of knowledge

Families’ knowledge and skills for running their households and for ensuring the well-being of the family (Moll, Amanti, Neff, Gonzalez, 1992)

- Gardening, construction, mechanics, sewing, cooking, etc.
- Value of children and families’ sociocultural experiences and integrated with school knowledge
Making explicit connections with children’s sociocultural experiences

Using literature that reflects children’s experiences and expands children’s knowledge
Using Culturally Responsive Literature
Selecting Culturally Responsive Literature
(Axelrod & Gillanders, 2015)

• Authenticity
• Language
• Illustrations
• Stories
Criteria for selecting books for DLLs

Authenticity

• Self-identity
• Connection with the readers’ lives
Criteria for selecting books for DLLs

• Language
  – Words that reflect sociocultural practices
  – Bilingual books
  – Script
Criteria for selecting books for DLLs

Illustrations
Criteria for selecting books for DLLs

Stories
Now your turn

Using the book at your table, select three core vocabulary words

– Is this word important for understanding the story?
– Can the word be demonstrated in a gesture or be represented with an object or picture?
– Is this a word that frequently appears in texts and will help children understand other stories?
– Is there a variety of types of words (i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs)?
– How does this word relate to children’s experiences?
• What is a child-friendly definition for each of the words?
• What questions can you ask children to help them relate the word with past experiences?
• What object can you use to represent the word?
• How will you know if the children already know this word?

Planning your reading aloud
Planning your reading aloud

- 1\textsuperscript{st}. Day: Picture Walk
- 2\textsuperscript{nd}. Day: Reading Aloud in Spanish
- 3\textsuperscript{rd}. Day: Reading Aloud in English
- 4\textsuperscript{th}. Day: Retelling
- 5\textsuperscript{th}. Day: Dramatization
Resources


THANK YOU! ¡GRACIAS!

CRISTINA.GILLANDERS@UCDENVER.EDU