



# Dual Language on Demand



Issue 6 Spring 2010

## A Growing Dual Language Program

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Hawthorn School District 73's mission "Learning for all...whatever it takes," has always meant that teachers, administrators, and board members alike have strived to reach every one of the learners who passes through any of the schools' doors. So as the district was faced with a growing number of English Language Learners, our Board of Education and the administration became interested in what research points out to be one of the best ways to educate these students: Dual Language programming. The idea of a Hawthorn Dual Language program seemed ideal, having two distinct language groups of students coming together to learn each other's cultures and languages. After much research and planning, Dual Language at Hawthorn began in 2001 as a strand within both Hawthorn Elementary North and Hawthorn Elementary South. The idea was to begin with two Kindergarten and two first grade classes and expand each year into a K-5 program.

Since the first year of Dual Language at Hawthorn in 2001, the program has grown in many ways. In 2005, as the program reached the fifth grade level, both strands of Dual Language came together to be housed in the new district elementary school, Hawthorn Townline. As parent interest and numbers of both native Spanish and English applicants grew, the district opted to add a third section of Dual Language in 2006. This third section has expanded up through third grade and will continue to increase program's size until we have three sections of Dual Language K-5 in 2011. After 5<sup>th</sup> grade, students go on to the middle school to receive an advanced Spanish class in grades 6-8.

This year, the program at Townline has been named the Townline School of Dual Language, a separate school within a school and I have the privilege of being the school's principal. The support the program has received from the Board of Education and our district's superintendent, Dr. Zook, has allowed for our program to focus on program specific goals as a separate school while still following the rigorous Hawthorn comprehensive curriculum.

Since I began in Dual Language at Hawthorn as a second grade teacher in 2002, the program has grown from a small core of five Dual Language teachers to a large team of educators working together for the benefit of our students. Today there are fifteen kindergarten through fifth grade classroom teachers, as well as learning center teachers to provide interventions in English and Spanish, related arts teachers working to make connections between content areas and languages, and our district's Bilingual Coordinator, Lara Christoun who all work together to continue the development and progress of the Dual Language program.

I am excited to see what the future has in store for our Dual Language program as we grow together under the new title of the Townline School of Dual Language and strive to achieve the ultimate goal of a biliterate, bilingual, and bicultural student population.

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# The Promise of Paired Literacy

By Susan Hopewell & Kathy Escamilla  
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It is a well established fact that children in bilingual programs do as well as, or better than, their peers in all English programs. Further, they reap the cognitive, social, personal, and economic advantages of knowing more than one language. The scientific evidence is indisputable (August & Shanahan, 2006; Rolstad, Mohoney, & Glass, 2008); yet we continue to debate the merits of bilingual education versus monolingual education rather than directing our energy to increase the quality of our bilingual programs (Cheung & Slavin, 2005). The time has come to shift the tenor of the conversation away from language of instruction to an exploration and articulation of our most promising practices. One such practice is *paired literacy* (Slavin & Cheung, 2005).

Paired literacy is a holistic approach to teaching reading in which students learn to read in two languages simultaneously beginning in kindergarten or first grade. Traditionally, this has meant that students either participate in two literacy blocks each day, or that the literacy block alternates languages by day. Current iterations blur these divisions, so that there is a more flexible use of languages within a unified literacy block. The success of this model depends upon a comprehensive view of the literate human being in which concepts and languages contribute to a unique and inseparable whole. It recognizes that most of our students are simultaneous bilinguals who are born in the United States; they are not confused by the speaking and learning of two languages (Capp, Fix, Murray, Ost, Passel, & Herwanto, 2005). They have been doing so since birth.

Holistic bilingualism situates languages as part of a complex, dynamic, and integrated system (Grosjean, 1989). Languages are not autonomous units operating in isolation, but rather heterogeneous parts that form a synergetic whole. Altering one part of the system has an effect on other parts of the system. This means that any time spent studying one language is time that contributes to the entire linguistic system. A seemingly small change, the addition of a single vocabulary word, for instance, is not just a gain in one language, but a gain in the whole linguistic system. The child who learns that *apple* and *manzana* are words for the same concept gains linguistic flexibility and knowledge about the arbitrary nature of words. Patterns between and among languages allow for exponential linguistic growth as is the case when a student grasps the concept of cognates and is able to strengthen the associations and bonds that form the whole. These seemingly simple advances permanently alter the integration of the languages within the complex system. Biliteracy, then, within this holistic framework, is understood to be a process and a journey with fluid and varying destinations.

The outdated argument that a first language is a bridge to English must be abandoned to make room for a broader conceptualization of all languages contributing to a whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Spanish is not a bridge to English or English a bridge to Spanish. Rather, each contributes to a larger linguistic system and the knowledge gained in one contributes to knowledge about the other. These contributions and influences are multidirectional. Thus, we need to expand our concern from second language acquisition to bilingual acquisition. This shift recognizes that any base language that comes into contact with another language will be permanently modified or restructured simply because it has come into contact with that alternative language. Further, it challenges the idea that students should not engage in formal literacy instruction in a second language until they have reached a particular reading level in their base language, or an oral proficiency level in their additional language. Paired instruction eliminates the false separation of literacies, and engages students in a fuller literacy learning experience that integrates reading, writing, speaking, listening, viewing, processing, creating, and analyzing across languages.

As researchers, we have been exploring how to cultivate, assess, and interpret a trajectory toward biliteracy using a paired literacy approach. Our longitudinal evidence confirms that paired literacy instruction, when implemented strategically, results in accelerated literacy acquisition in both languages in reading and writing (Escamilla & Hopewell, 2010; Soltero-González, Escamilla, & Hopewell, in press). These practices demand that teachers plan with great foresight, and that they attend purposefully to literacy as a holistic endeavor that is facilitated by



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multiple and differing forms of input rather than as separate accomplishments that are language specific. Paired literacy practices are not duplicative, and do not involve concurrent translation. They begin with literacy instruction that is valid for the internal structure of each language and which honors authentic teaching and learning. Literacy materials in Spanish, for instance, should not be mere translations of English language programs.

Further, pedagogies developed to facilitate the teaching and learning of English should not be forced upon the Spanish language. As an example, consider that in Spanish the five vowel sounds are consistent and do not change their sound when paired with consonants. In contrast, English vowel sounds change depending on the word pattern and their pairings with consonants. Even though Spanish and English share an alphabetic principle, their internal structures are quite different. Analytic approaches to teaching literacy need to understand and be based upon the utilization of "best practice" principles that are specific to each language. In other words, the internal structure of Spanish reveals that teaching the vowels first, a practice that would make no sense from an English language perspective, is a sound practice.

Paired literacy requires teachers to be astute observers of students. Emerging bilingual students distribute and acquire literacy skills and knowledge across languages. As students begin to control literacy skills in one language, they should be expected to apply them to the other. Successful students do not compartmentalize languages or learnings, and one of the goals of paired literacy pedagogies is to make these connections more explicit as early as possible. There is no reason that a student who understands the concept of a letter or a word in one language, cannot be shown how these concepts function in the other. Each new literacy accomplishment should be connected across languages with explicit comparisons of the similarities and differences students will encounter by language. Teachers expand students' repertoires by extending their meaning-making opportunities to include those that can only be accessed by bilingual learners (e.g. cognate recognition).

Finally, the co-existence of two or more languages in emerging bilingual children contributes experiences and knowledge that can never be measured or understood independent of one another. Emerging bilingual children cannot, and should not, be expected to demonstrate the totality of their literacy capabilities solely in one language. We have found that students who are progressing along a satisfactory trajectory toward biliteracy demonstrate Spanish language literacy skills that are slightly more advanced than their English language literacy skills, but that a large discrepancy is not apparent between the two. The only way to measure and document this trajectory is to assess productive and receptive skills in each language and to compare them side by side. Purposeful instruction results in less discrepancy between what students know and apply in one language and what they know and apply in the other, but there is no way to know this without bilingual assessment.

In sum, paired literacy practices in which students learn to read, write, speak, listen, view, process, create, and analyze across languages beginning in kindergarten or first grade hold much promise for our emerging bilingual learners. Purposeful and deliberate instruction that connects languages expands students' opportunities to learn.

## About the Authors

Kathy Escamilla is a professor in education at the University of Colorado, Boulder. She does research on biliteracy development and assessment of Spanish-speaking Latino teacher children. She has over 35 years of experience in the field of bilingual/ESL education as a teacher, researcher, and school administrator.

Susan Hopewell is a doctoral candidate at the University of Colorado, Boulder. Her research focuses on strengthening biliteracy education for Spanish-English bilingual children in the United States. Her K-12 teaching experience includes 8 years as a classroom teacher in a dual language elementary school and 4 years as the literacy coach in a maintenance bilingual program.



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## WIDA Explores Spanish Language Development Standards

The World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium is developing K-12 Spanish Language Development Standards in anticipation of designing an aligned test. **Your input would be extremely valuable!** A survey will be published on the WIDA Web site at the following link:

[www.wida.us/standards/sla.aspx](http://www.wida.us/standards/sla.aspx)

Currently, 22 states use the WIDA English Language Proficiency Standards for the design of English language curriculum and administer WIDA assessments to measure students' English language proficiency. Several states, including Illinois, have officially adopted WIDA's Spanish Language Arts standards for use in bilingual and dual language programs. Now, WIDA seeks to understand the possible uses for Spanish Language Development Standards addressing the language of other content areas, including Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, as well as Social and Instructional Spanish. Please consider spending about 10 minutes of your time filling out this survey which will help guide the development of future standards and assessments.



# Making Content Comprehensible: Building Academic Language and Background Knowledge in the Dual Language Classroom

By Cheryl Urow, Illinois Resource Center, Education Specialist

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Overheard in a dual language classroom:

Student 1: No, no! Tu tienes que add up the lengths of the sides of the triangle if you want to find the perímetro. Counting the squares inside is for area.

Student 2: Pero, it's my turn. Give me the pencil or I'm going to tell the teacher!

Student 1: Fine, but I know you're wrong!



OK, so it's not the most academic of interchanges between two students in a dual language classroom, but it probably sounds very familiar. Two students are involved in some kind of hands-on, collaborative activity concerning the measurement of area and perimeter. While the first student attempted to use Spanish, which was the language of instruction for math and the language the teacher instructed the students to use during this pair activity, he turned quickly to English in his attempt to explain the concept to his partner. His partner - more focused on the social-instructional aspect of the activity (whose turn it was to hold the pencil) - made only a token attempt at Spanish. It is clear that if we expect students to be orally proficient in two languages, time is needed for the explicit instruction of academic oral language.

But even before we expect students to have productive language (the ability to speak and write) in two languages, we need to make sure they have the receptive language to understand what we are saying, what their peers are saying, what we want them to do, and what the focus of the lesson is. Therefore, crucial to the success of any dual language classroom is the strategic, explicit, and pre-planned use of strategies designed to make content comprehensible and build academic oral language and background knowledge, while at the same time promoting higher level thinking. As dual language instructors, we need to remember that regardless of the medium of instruction – whether it is English time or time for the non-English language – some portion of the class is engaged in learning a new content in a new language. At the same time, though, another portion of the class is learning a new concept in a language in which they are proficient or at least familiar. Therefore, while time must be dedicated the development of academic oral language and background knowledge, it must meet the needs of both the language learner and the student who has some proficiency in that language.

The effective building of background knowledge and academic language, which has the added benefit of making content much more comprehensible, can happen only when time is set aside explicitly for this purpose. While many purchased lessons instruct teachers to connect to student background as a first step in the lesson, there are few lessons designed and developed specifically for dual language classrooms. The vast majority of lessons available for purchase or on the internet are designed either for monolingual English classrooms, or monolingual classrooms in the non-English language – usually referred to as bilingual classrooms. This means that the majority of the lessons out there are focused on teaching a somewhat homogeneous group of students. In the case of dual language, teachers are required to deliver lessons that meet the needs of two very different groups of students - majority language speakers (native English speakers) and English Language Learners who have some level of proficiency in the same non-English language.

To that end, all content or information (whether this is academic content or directions on how to carry out an activity or the correct way to line up for art) must be delivered in a highly comprehensible way in the language of instruction without translation. This means that if it is Spanish time, all instruction, directions, and day-to-day classroom logistics must be carried out – in a comprehensible way – in Spanish. Making sure to dedicate time for the development of academic language prior to the beginning of a new unit of study and the consistent use of strategies that make content comprehensible throughout the lesson are effective ways to ensure comprehension.



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Dedicating time for the development of academic language and background knowledge prior to the beginning of a new unit of study may take the form of a hands-on activity. Examples include utilizing Total Physical Response (also known as TPR, the process of associating physical movements with key vocabulary, concepts, or phrases) or interacting with the focus of the upcoming lesson, such as watching water turn to vapor and then condense. Whatever strategy is used, it must be concrete and interactive and include a focus on developing the background knowledge and vocabulary necessary to understand the focus of the lesson. For example, if the students will be starting a unit on seasons, as is common in many schools, the teacher would NOT begin by asking student what they know about spring, or what they want to learn, as in KWL. An oral discussion is one of the most decontextualized and abstract of strategies. Rather, a unit on the seasons would begin with a study of the current season, and would begin with a walk outside supported by TPR. There the teacher can concretely model her sensory description of the season. As the students walk outside the teacher can stop, put her hand to her ear, point at a bird and say, "I can hear the birds in spring." In addition to pointing at the bird, she flaps her wings, to indicate a bird. (The pointing and flapping are elements of TPR.) She can go on and stop at a flower, take a deep breath, and say "I can smell the flowers in the spring." In addition to taking the deep breath to support the concept of smell, she also points at and mimes picking the flower. Of course, as she performs these actions, she is encouraging those students who can to share their own sensory responses to the season. Then, back in the classroom, the teacher can post and reiterate the key phrases, "In spring, I can hear...; In spring, I can smell..., etc." As she says the phrases, she mimes what she is doing – that is, she engages in TPR - so as to support the meaning of the words for those students learning in their second language. Now, only after the concrete activity and the modeling, only after posting and once again modeling the key phrases and vocabulary through TPR, does the teacher ask what students know about spring. Now she can begin the KWL. She has taken the time to ensure that every student in that classroom has had an experience with spring, and has the language to describe those experiences. Furthermore, because she has used TPR with the vocabulary (such as putting her hand to her ear for hear, flapping her wings for bird, pointing and smelling the flowers.) she has given a tool to those students who may have receptive vocabulary (they can understand what she is saying) but have not yet developed the productive vocabulary (they cannot yet produce the word "hear" or "bird" in the language of instruction).

While time must be dedicated to the development of background knowledge and vocabulary development prior to the beginning of a new lesson, teachers in dual language classrooms must also consistently use strategies that make content comprehensible during the lessons. This means keeping word banks posted, continuing to use the physical movements along with the key vocabulary, and consistently using pictures and realia.

One powerful strategy for making classroom directions comprehensible is through a fishbowl. As the name implies, the fishbowl strategy involves selecting several students to be in the center of the class, and the other students gather around the selected students and observe their actions as if they were in a fishbowl. Rather than explain to the students how to do a cooperative activity or a center activity, the teacher selects a small group of students, and puts them in the fishbowl. She has all the other students gather around to observe these students as she walks them through the center activity. In addition to modeling the behavior, the teacher also has the opportunity to model the language she wants the students to use. Using the example from the beginning of this article, the teacher could have done the following:

Maestra: Pablo, dile a Lucía, - ¿Me permite medir el perímetro de este triángulo? (The teacher writes this key phrase on the board.)  
Pablo: Lucía, ¿ me permite medir el perímetro de este triángulo?  
Maestra: Muy bien. Ahora, Lucía, tu le dices a Pablo, - Con mucho gusto.  
¡Adelante! (The teacher writes these phrases on the board)  
Lucía: Con mucho gusto, ¡Adelante!

Pablo begins measuring the perimeter of the triangle by counting the squares in the triangle. The teacher notices that Lucía is reaching her hand over to stop him and says,

Maestra: Lucía, creo que quieres decirle algo a Pablo. ¿Es cierto  
Lucía: Sí, he has to...  
Maestra: ¿Se lo puedes decir en español? Dile, - Creo que te has equivocado.  
El perímetro se mide por medio de sumar el largo de cada lado. El contar los cuadritos es hallar el área. (She writes the first sentence only on the board. There is a word bank posted, created during the pre-lesson TPR that the teacher did to introduce the words and phrases key to studying perimeter and area: perímetro, área, hallar, sumar, contar, etc.)  
Lucía: Creo que te has equivocado. Lo tienes que hacer con la regla.  
Maestra: Muy bien, Lucía. Ahora, Pablo, dile a Lucía, - Muchas gracias.  
¿Me puedes pasar la regla por favor? (She posts the last two sentences on the board.)  
Pablo: Gracias. (He points at the ruler without saying anything, and Lucía begins to pass it to him. The teacher gently stops Lucía and, looking pointedly at Pablo, puts her hand on the last sentence she wrote on the board).  
Pablo: ¿Me puedes pasar la regla por favor?







## The Illinois Resource Center Announces *Dual U Summer Institute, 2010*

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The Illinois Resource Center will be hosting its fourth annual Dual U Summer Institute (DUSI) in Santa Fe, New Mexico from June 13 through June 18, 2010. This intensive five day workshop has been designed for dual language teachers, administrators, and those responsible for dual language professional development.

DUSI 2010 will include two unique strands. The first strand, Foundations of Dual Language Instruction for Teachers and Administrators, will focus on the practice of dual language instruction. Designed for dual language teachers, administrators and curriculum coordinators, Foundations of Dual Language Instruction will lead workshop participants through a variety of hands-on interactive activities created specifically for dual language classroom instruction. Participants will review research and best practices in dual language instruction, and will experience strategies designed to enhance bilingualism and biliteracy.

The Trainer of Trainers (TOT), the other strand in DUSI 2010, is designed for the dual language professional developer. The TOT strand will provide participants with an overview of the resources, strategies and activities within the eight-module, online Dual U Training Curriculum. This five day training will enable participants to deliver a comprehensive professional development program to a variety of dual language stakeholders (e.g., parents, teachers, administrators, school board members) in their own districts and schools. A foundational knowledge and familiarity with dual language education is highly suggested for participation in this strand.

In addition to the five day intensive workshop, all DUSI participants will receive on-line access to and hard copy of the Dual U Training Curriculum, a copy of *Dual Language Instruction*, by Nancy Cloud, Fred Genesee and Else Hamayan, and a copy of *Assessment and Accountability in Language Education Programs*, by Margo Gottlieb and Diep Nguyen. For more information and registration materials for DUSI 2010, please go to [http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/pages/f\\_events-dualu.html](http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/pages/f_events-dualu.html).

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## Dual Language Program Development & Enrichment 2010-2011

The Illinois Resource Center will once again be offering the year-long workshop series *Dual Language Program Development and Enrichment*. This workshop series is designed for district-level teams interested in implementing a new dual language program, or enriching their current dual programming. The district level teams – consisting of five to eight members – will meet three times during the 2010-2011 school year. All team members are expected to attend all six workshop dates: October 27 & 28, 2010; January 11 & 12, 2011; and March 22 & 23, 2011.

The meetings, held in Arlington Heights, will take teams through a series of activities designed to develop district level expertise in dual language program development, including: program model options, program non negotiables, opportunities for data mining and analysis, frameworks for using data to research to craft a viable dual language program, and practical tools for making decisions about dual language implementation and development.

For more information, consult the Illinois Resource Center Professional Development Program Catalogue for 2010-2011, which is scheduled for publication at the end of August. You may access the catalogue on-line at [thecenterweb.org/irc](http://thecenterweb.org/irc). Or, you may contact Cheryl Urow at [curow@cntrmail.org](mailto:curow@cntrmail.org) or Karen Beeman, at [kbeemen@cntrmail.org](mailto:kbeemen@cntrmail.org).