Strategies for Supporting Dual Language Learners

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Synopsis: When learning a second language, children progress through the stages of dual language development, and teachers can utilize different strategies with individual children at each stage. This interactive presentation will focus on the specific language development strategies that teachers can use with children within the context of the stages of dual language development.

Research

English language learners score higher academically over the long term in English when their home language skills are developed in School.

When tested in English, English language learners who learn in their home language and gradually transition to English significantly outperform students who learn in all-English immersion programs. Emergent bilinguals know a similar total number of words as monolinguals. The difference is in how the words are distributed across their two languages. Typically 40 to 70 per cent of the total words known by bilinguals are known in one language only. In the dominant language, bilinguals know more unique words and speak in longer phrases.

Stages of Second Language Acquisition

STAGE 1: HOME LANGUAGE

Imagine yourself as a young child facing a situation in which many people are speaking a different language. If you want to interact with other children you can do two things—stop talking altogether and use nonverbal ways to communicate, or use your home language, which may not be understood by the other children or adults.

Some children opt to use their home language since it has been their only means of communication. In a study, Saville-Troike (1987) noticed that children in a child care setting continued speaking their home language to communicate with other children, who would in turn reply in their own language. This form of communication was generally effective when the children were playing. Communication broke down when the context did not supply enough information or offer enough environmental cues for meaning to be understood. Eventually, of course, children abandon using their home language with those who do not understand it.

During this phase children may prefer to use other means to communicate (gestures, facial expressions, sounds), rather than "talk" (speech) with their teachers. Most children spend only a month or two in this stage. However, it can take up to six months, as noted by Hakuta (1997) in his observations of a Japanese girl attending kindergarten in the U.S., who did not speak for six months.

Teacher: "I was worried because Sandy and Henry were not saying much even though they had been in my class for six months. Then I noticed they were really attending as if to catch every single word that came out of my mouth. I suddenly realized they were processing what they were hearing, getting used to the new sounds in English that were not there in Vietnamese or Mandarin, watching where I was pointing to see what I was labeling. It was soon after that they both started expressing themselves more in English."

Children may not be talking at school during this phase, but that does not mean they are not attending to and processing language. Like infants learning to speak their first language, second language learners develop their understanding of the language before they are able to use it to

communicate. However, they will still use their home language and whatever they know of their second language in more relaxed situations. During this time children begin actively to "crack the code" of the second language.

Children will rehearse the second language by repeating in a low voice what other speakers say and by playing with the sounds of the new language (Saville-Troike, 1987). Repetition seems to be an important part of this rehearsal process. Young children typically repeat the ends of utterances they hear around them. Their speech at this point is private, not meant for communication but as practice. Children seem to be connecting English words with appropriate objects, actions, and situations. Like young children acquiring their first language, children learning a second language play with the sounds of the language and gradually decipher the sounds, meanings, and patterns of the new one.

STAGE 2: OBSERVATIONAL AND LISTENING

Previously, this stage has been referred to as the "silent" or "nonverbal" period because children tend to be quiet when engaged in challenging school activities. However, what children are typically doing at this stage is spending most of their energy listening in order to make sense of their new language and observing all the gestures and environmental cues associated with this new language.

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The next stage involves trying out the second language—using what you know to communicate. Because the child knows so little at this point, he or she typically resorts to the use of telegraphic speech and formulas. **Telegraphic speech** refers to the use of a few content words without functional words or certain grammatical markers that communicate, for example, action, possession, or location. The young child does the same in acquiring the first language—"Mommy milk," "Daddy shoe," and "Fish water" are examples. A child learning a second language often starts by using single words or two-word utterances to name objects: "car," "apple juice," "sand box." The child is beginning to develop a vocabulary of object names to use in interacting with native speakers.

Formulaic speech, or the use of "formulas," is another strategy used by English Learners that has been observed by researchers (McLaughlin, 1984; Tabors, 1997). The formulas are chunks or phrases that the child uses without completely understanding how they function in the language. Children use these phrases in certain situations to achieve certain aims because they have heard other children using the phrases successfully (Wong Fillmore, 1991). Wong Fillmore's analysis of the children's use of the formulaic expressions indicates that the children were using these chunks of language to engage in activities that promote language learning. The children would guess about the conditions under which particular utterances might appropriately be spoken. By using these formulas and receiving feedback that told them whether their guesses were right or wrong, the children could test their conclusions. Formulas provided the tool for children to learn more about their language.

Examples of formulas or formulaic speech:

I like _____ .	Gimme (Give me) _____ .	I want/wanna _____ .
I like milk.	Gimme book.	I want/wanna play.
I like Bob.	Gimme juice.	I want/wanna go.
I like mommy.	Gimme blocks.	I want/wanna doll.

A child involved in this process may seem to be regressing in his or her language abilities. The packaged formulas the child uses are typically grammatically correct, but he or she now may make grammatical mistakes. This process is similar to the one the child learning English as a first language goes through in learning rules for plurals and past tenses. For example, the child may say "runned" instead of "ran". The child is no longer using memorized forms, but instead moving to a higher level of language learning by analyzing the language and trying to "make sense of it.

Being the young scientists that they are, children make hypotheses about language forms and about their use in specific situations. Children are continually testing their hypotheses. Thus, it is important for teachers to provide rich language environments that foster spoken language/verbal communication or "talk." Teachers should realize that most of the children's early attempts with language are not intentional grammatical errors. They are developmental phases of language learning. Correcting a child's speech at the sound of a perceived "error" might have negative consequences on the child's self-esteem and impede the natural developmental process.

Teacher: "I realized how important it was to allow children to use formulas and expressions that they have learned, even when their use was not always correct. When children used such expressions as 'How you do dese bananas?' or 'Gimme that thing,' I recognized they were interacting verbally and that this was more important than my need for grammatical correctness."

As children demonstrate an understanding of the rules of English, they are able to apply them to achieve increasing control over the language. At this point they are using the new language much more creatively and begin to sound more like a native speaker.

Social English

Social English is a variety of English used first by children during this phase of language development in which children use more fluid speech (language) in the second language. ***Social English*** is considered to be informal and predominantly spoken, with short and simple sentence structures. It, therefore, requires a smaller vocabulary than Academic English (Cummins, 1991). Some educators refer to Social English as "conversational" English (Shefelbine, 1998).

Children use Social English most often in interactions with friends and adults in relaxed or playful situations. Some children may progress into this stage with incredible speed while others may take noticeably longer to use their new language in social contexts. Some teachers may worry about the child who takes a bit longer to participate through spoken language at school. However, early childhood teachers should draw on their knowledge of early childhood development. Remembering that children achieve developmental milestones, including those in first and second language development, at different rates will help teachers put different children's progress in perspective.

Academic English

Academic English, in contrast to Social English, takes much longer to learn. Studies have shown that it takes school-age children five to seven years to master Academic English (Collier & Thomas, 2000). ***Academic English*** is more formal than Social English and requires the use of longer, more complex sentence structures. Therefore the child needs to have mastery of a larger vocabulary (Cummins, 1991). Academic English requires the child to perform in all four of the language skills addressed in school: listening, speaking, reading, and writing.

Because of the advanced requirements of Academic English and the time it takes to master it, the use of the child's home language as the child masters English will help the child learn important concepts. Some teachers who are not proficient in a child's home language provide academic support in that home language by planning activities that can be implemented by family or community volunteers who do speak the language. When there are no adults in the classroom who speak the child's home language, the teacher can make use of the other strategies included in this guide, such as the ones below, many of which are common strategies used by preschool teachers to make concepts meaningful for children.

California Department of Education, <u>Preschool English Learners: Principles and Practices to Promote Language, Literacy, and Learning</u>, Sacramento, CA: 2005.

Strategies for Supporting Dual Language Learners

During Stage 1 ---Home Language---, use Self Talk and Parallel Talk.

During Stage 2 ---Observational and Listening---, use Self Talk and Parallel Talk.

During Stage 3 ---Telegraphic/Formulaic---, use Repetition and Extension

During Stage 4 ---Fluid Language Use---, use Open-ended Questions, Frontloading, and Advanced Language

Self -Talk and Parallel Talk

Self-Talk is a strategy in which the adult describes what he or she is doing. The adult provides the words to describe her actions, without expecting the child to respond.

<u>When to use Self-Talk:</u>
- Use with children who are non-verbal or have low verbal skills
- Can also be used for teacher directed activities such as cooking or gardening with children

<u>Examples of Self-Talk:</u>
 "I'm sitting down at the table next to Carlos. I want to see what Carlos is doing with the play doh."

"Now I am writing a 'W.' I start here and go down, up, down, and up again. There---a 'W'."

"I am digging in the sand with Monique. Deeper…deeper…deeper.   Oh no---the sand is starting to cave in!"

Parallel Talk is a technique in which the adult describes what the child is doing or seeing. When an adult uses Parallel Talk, she is acting like a broadcaster. She watches the action and describes it to the child, without expecting a response. The teacher does not ask the child questions during parallel talk.

<u>Examples of Parallel Talk:</u>
If a child is playing with colored blocks, a teacher using Parallel Talk might say:
> "Oh, you put the yellow block on top. Now you're sliding the
> green one next to the long red block. The tower is getting taller."

If a child is playing with Sesame Street characters, a teacher using Parallel Talk might say:
> "Here comes Oscar the Grouch. He's riding in the car with Cookie
> Monster. Cookie Monster's in the back. He's looking around
> while the car goes faster and faster."

If an infant is upset and crying after her mother leaves, a teacher using Parallel
> Talk might say: "Tanisha, you really hate to see your mom leave!
> You are feeling very sad. You wish that she could stay with you."

Self Talk and Parallel Talk help adults and children develop a relationship. The strategies of Self Talk and Parallel Talk give the adult a starting place, something to talk about. The adult makes comments on the child's actions and follows the child's lead.   If the child is upset, Parallel Talk helps him to feel respected and validated. If the child is engaged in play, she enjoys the time and attention.

Self Talk and Parallel Talk helps children who are shy or have limited language.
Self Talk and Parallel Talk are a good way to begin talking with any young child, at any time. The child has the opportunity to develop receptive language, but there is no expectation that the child will respond. These techniques can be especially effective with non-verbal children, with children who are shy, and with English language learners. It builds language for all children.

Adults often feel self-conscious or awkward when they begin to use Self Talk and Parallel Talk. To use Self Talk and Parallel Talk the adult learns to talk in a new way---describing, not questioning. But speaking is only part of it. Observing the child's action carefully is the key.

Beginners using Self Talk and Parallel Talk often overwhelm children with too much description. In the beginning, it's easy to concentrate so hard on becoming a good describer that the natural pace and flow of conversation is overlooked. The adult doesn't need to comment on every single action. Commenting on every second or third action creates a more natural conversational pace and gives the child a chance to respond, if he chooses.

For dual language learners Self Talk and Parallel Talk are excellent strategies for giving attention to the child while also building the child's receptive language. The adult using Self Talk and Parallel Talk in English with a dual language learner is modeling language, giving attention to the child, developing a relationship with the child, and facilitating the child's receptive language development. With a dual language learner, the adult controls the number of words she uses and may select a high frequency word to physically demonstrate and repeat.   Adults can even use Self Talk and Parallel Talk with children who speak languages that the adult is unfamiliar with.

Teacher: "Oh, you're stacking the blue blocks (also using hand gestures of stacking). One, two, three blue blocks. "

Other terms for Parallel Talk: information talk, narratives, commentary, broadcasting.

Pianta, Robert C,, La Paro, Karen M., & Hamre, Bridget K. (2008) Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual Pre-K, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, Baltimore, MD.

Sharp, Carrie (1987) Now You're Talking: Techniques that Extend Conversations Facilitators Guide, Educational Productions, Inc. Portland, OR

Repetition and Extension

Repetition and Extension are language stimulation techniques that teachers can use to keep conversations going. They can also increase children's vocabulary.

Using **Repetition**, the adult listens to what the child says and then restates or re-phrases the child's words. The adult listens to the child, then uses the child's words in a more complete phrase or sentence.

Child: Painting the box.
Teacher: Oh, you're painting the box blue.

Child: Car goes fast.
Teacher: Yes, your car is going very fast.

Child: That her dolly.
Teacher: That is her dolly!

Using **Extension**, the adult first expands the child's phrase or sentence, and then adds another sentence on the child's topic to extend the conversation further.

Child:	Painting the box.
Teacher:	Oh, you're painting the box blue. It's a good box for your rocks.
Child:	Car goes fast.
Teacher:	Yes, your car is going very fast. It's coming around the table.
Child:	That her dolly.
Teacher:	Yes, that is Miya's dolly. She looks like she is hungry.
Child:	Hmmm!
Teacher:	Hmmm, the pancakes taste good. I love to eat pancakes on Sunday mornings.

Using Repetition and Extension helps to keep conversations going by focusing on the child's language. The adult listens carefully to what the child is saying and responds by expanding the child's words into more complete phrases or sentences. The child determines the topic. The adult follows the child's lead, adding more content to the conversation, new vocabulary, and new sentence structures. When using Repetition and Extension, the adult does not ask the child questions.

The success of Repetition and Extension depends on the adult's ability to understand not only the child's words, but also her intent--- and to add information which is of interest to the child. Conversations that are not child-centered usually end prematurely, while child-center expansions lead to increased conversation.

Child-centered	Not child-centered
Child: New shoes.	Child: New shoes.
Adult: Wow, you do have new shoes! I'll bet you can run really fast in them.	Adult: Oh, you have on new shoes. What color are they?
Child: Truck broke.	Child: Truck broke.
Adult: Yes, the truck is broken. The gas station where they fix trucks is open.	Adult: Oh no! The truck is broken! Someone should have been more careful.
Child: Birthday cake.	Child: Birthday cake.
Adult: Here's your birthday cake! Happy birthday to you! I love to eat birthday cake.	Adult: Oh, a birthday cake. How nice. What shape is it?

For dual language learners the strategies of Repetition and Extension are effective when the child begins to use expressive language in the second language. The adult carefully pays attention to what the child says and then validates the child's efforts by repeating and reinforcing the child's words.

Child:	[Child is putting on his jacket.] "Zipper?"
Teacher:	"Yes, that's the zipper. I can help you zip your jacket."
Child:	"Gimme juice."
Teacher:	"You want me to give you some juice? Here is a cup of apple juice."

Notari-Syverson, Angela, O'Connor, Rollanda, & Vadsay, Patricia F. (2001) Ladders to Literacy, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, Baltimore, MD.

Pianta, Robert C,, La aro, Karen M., & Hamre, Bridget K. (2008) <u>Classroom Assessment Scoring System Manual Pre-K</u>, Paul H. Brookes Publishing Co, Baltimore, MD.

Sharp, Carrie (1987) <u>Now You're Talking: Techniques that Extend Conversations Facilitators Guide</u>, Educational Productions, Inc. Portland, OR

Open-Ended Questions

Questions that have more than one right answer, or ones than can be answered in many ways, are called open-ended or divergent questions. This way of asking questions stimulates more language use, acknowledges that there can be many solutions to one problem, affirms children's ideas, and encourages creative thinking.

Open-ended questions open up conversations. When you ask an open-ended question, you don't know what the child's answer is going to be. Close-ended questions usually limit conversation to a one or two word response, and sometimes they end the conversation. Examples:

Close-ended question:	"What color is this?"
Open-ended question:	"You used a lot of blue on your painting. What does it remind you of?"
Close-ended question:	"How many teddy bears are on the block?"
Open-ended question:	"What are those teddy bears thinking about?"
Close-ended question:	"What's your doll's name?"
Open-ended question:	"Your baby is so beautiful! Tell me about her."

Children must have a high level of verbal skills to respond to open-ended questions. Because open-ended questions have a wide-range of possible answers, children are able to respond only if they have a fairly high level of verbal skills, vocabulary, and self-confidence. If the child has limited verbal skills, use parallel talk, repetition, extension, or ask a close-ended question.

The success of open-ended questions depends on the adult's ability to understand the child's interest or focus. The adult may be used to asking questions aimed at assessing how much a child knows (about color, number, shape or alphabet) and may find it difficult at first to ask engaging questions with no right answer. Close-ended questions usually end conversations. Open-ended questions that are too general or unfocused may be difficult for the child to respond to and may also end the conversation.

A child has been using fingerpaint on the art table, mixing together orange, blue, and yellow. A teacher approaches.

Close-ended question:	Teacher: "What colors are you using?"
	Child: "Orange."
General open-ended question:	Teacher: "Tell me about what you are doing."
	Child: "Mixing colors."
Targeted open-ended question:	Teacher:"Wow! How did you get this color? What did you do first?"
	Child: "First I stuck my hand in the blue paint, then I stucked my other hand in the orange paint. I made the paint squeeze through my fingers. It felt yucky. Then it started changing colors!"

Open-ended questions that are challenging can develop children's thinking skills : Challenging children by posing thought-provoking, open-ended questions that are rich and clear can stimulate and push at the edges of children's development. These questions are often expressed in conditional form "What will happen if you…?"

Types of open-ended questions that are challenging include:

- Making predictions - *What do you think will happen if you keep adding blocks to your tower?*

- Stretching thinking - *What would happen if there were no cars, trucks, buses, planes, or boats? How would we get around?*

- Considering consequences - *What would happen if you left your drawing outside and it rained?*

- Assessing feelings - *How would you feel if that happened to you?   How do you think Juan feels?*

- Thinking about similarities and differences - *How are these two blocks the same? What makes these things go together?*

- Applying knowledge to solve a problem - *What could you do to keep the paint from dripping on the floor?*

- Evaluating - *What made you decide to pick this book to read? How did this make you feel?*

For Dual Language Learners: Ask open-ended questions in the child's home language. This will help the child develop her cognitive skills and her home language skills. When using the child's second language, open-ended questions may be very difficult to understand and answer if the child is at a beginning level of language development. Close-ended questions, in contrast, provide limited vocabulary and simple choices that are easier for beginning English language learners to understand. As the child acquires language, the adult can gradually ask more complex close-ended questions and eventually move on to asking open-ended questions. "It helps if teachers use 'yes/no' questions with beginning English language learners, because these questions are easier than 'what' questions, and 'what' questions are easier than 'where' or 'when' questions. 'How' and 'why' questions are the most difficult for new speakers of the language." McLaughlin, Barry "Fostering Second Language Development in Young Children: Principles and Practices, National Center for Research on Cultural Diversity and Second Language Learning, 1995. www.ncela.gwu.edu/miscpubs/ncredsll/epr14.htm

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"Never ask a child a question that you already know the answer to."
        ---David Weikart, former president, High/Scope Educational Research Foundation

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Frontloading

Strategies for Reading a Storybook in English to Dual Language Learners

Carefully select an appropriate book:
- Select high interest books.
- Select books that are easy to understand. Assess the story: Will children who do not understand all the text be able to follow the basic storyline?
- Use books with repeatable text.
- Sometimes elect an alphabet book, a counting book, or a wordless book.

Frontload the story before reading:
- Pre-read the book. Identify to yourself key characters and concepts.
- With the children, briefly summarize the plot using the children's home language without telling them how the story ends.
- Teach key vocabulary. Point to a clear picture of the characters or the key concept in the book. Say the word in English. Ask the children to say the word. Say the word in the child's home language. Repeat the word again in English, and ask the children to say it again.

Modify your reading of the book:
- Read the entire book in English. Do <u>not</u> translate each page into another language.
- Emphasize a few targeted vocabulary words.
- Simplify the story line, if needed.
- Use repeatable text. Ask children to repeat sounds: "fe-fi-fo-fum."
- If children are able to engage in discussion using English, ask CROWD questions.

Strategies for Reading a Storybook using the Children's Home Language

Carefully select an appropriate book:
- Select books in the children's home language with high level vocabulary and complex sentences. Do not use simple books designed for very young children.
- Select books with complex stories.

Frontload the story before reading:
- Using English, briefly talk about the story and why you selected it.
- Introduce new vocabulary words that are in the story.

Modify your reading of the book:
- Read the entire book using the children's home language. Do not translate each page into English.
- Ask CROWD questions:
  - C - Completion questions: "And the pig said…"
  - R – Recall questions: "What happened first?"
  - O – Open-ended questions: "Why did the pig do that?"
  - W – "Wh" questions (who, what, where, or why): "Where did the pig go?"
  - D – Distancing questions: "Where have you seen a pig?"

- After reading the book, use Text Talk to teach new vocabulary:
  - Read again the sentence in the book that has the new vocabulary word.
  - Define the vocabulary word. Use other examples of this word in a sentence.
  - Have the children say the word aloud.

- o Ask the children for other examples using this word in a sentence.
- o Everyone repeat the word aloud once again.

- ▪ Ask the children if they think this is a true story or a pretend story (nonfiction/fiction) and why

Advanced Language

Advanced Language is a strategy in which the adult uses new forms of language, with increasing complexity, to increase children's exposure to parts of speech and vocabulary.   The teacher uses a variety of nouns, verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and other forms of language that are new to the child but based on concepts already understood by the child.   The adult makes connections between the new forms of language and the concepts that the child already understands. This scaffolds children to understand new vocabulary and concepts.

Teacher:	"Tell me about your hat."
Child:	"It is red, orange, yellow, green and blue."
Teacher:	"You have many different colors in your hat. It's a *multicolored* hat."
Teacher:	"Remember the word *embarrassed* from the book we read today? I feel *embarrassed* right now!"
Child:	"Why?"
Teacher:	"I thought everyone had served themselves, and I took the last of the french fries. I didn't notice that Manuel had not yet served himself----and I know that Manuel loves french fries! I wished that I hadn't taken all the fries. I feel *embarrassed*."

Advanced Language helps children develop vocabulary and may positively impact their later reading achievement.
There is a strong relationship between vocabulary development and reading achievement. Understanding the meaning of words is critical to understand what is read. Children who acquire strong vocabularies increase their ability to make sense of what a word might mean and how it might be pronounced.

As an early childhood educator, develop your awareness of common words versus rare words.
Exposure to less common, more sophisticated vocabulary (rare words) relates directly to children's vocabulary acquisition. Rare words are those that go beyond the typical 8500 most common words in the English languages. Examples: *nuisance, tackle, dazzle, brag, balance, tease, curious, rude, bloom*.

Common words:	**eat**	**see**	**said**
	nibble	stare	suggested
Rare words:	bolt	watch	mumbled
	chew	gaze	sighed
	inhale	glare	sobbed
	cram	glimpse	grumbled
	devour	identify	comforted
	dine	inspect	stammered
	feast upon	notice	encouraged
	feed	observe	joked
	slurp	peek	giggled
	gorge	peer	pleaded
	graze	recognize	begged

Start by using Advanced Language during conversations at lunch time and snack time.
Begin to use rare words and advanced language when you sit down with children for meals.   Use the words *nibble, chew, slurp*, and *swallow* to describe eating.   Some teachers select one or two words from a story they have read and use these words during their mealtime conversation. Techniques for helping teachers to remember these rare words include making a wall chart that lists the new vocabulary words or writing the words on a 3" x 5" card mounted in a table stand.

Select high quality storybooks that use Advanced Language.
Some preschool storybooks have only common words, and some introduce children to rare words that help to build children's vocabulary. Many of the Little Golden books have only common words. Too Many Tomales by Ed Martinez and Gary Soto introduces children to the words *chattered, drifted, dusk, glittered, sparkled, chattered, pumping, plopping*, and *platter*.   Its Okay to be Different by Todd Parr introduces children to the words *embarrassed, adopted, invisible*.

When reading storybooks, select one or two rare words to introduce to your children.
A technique for teaching children new vocabulary from a storybook is called "Text Talk."
When pre-reading a storybook, select one or two rare words to intentionally teach to your children.

Then use the steps of "Text Talk":

(1) Re-read the sentence from the book that has the word you are teaching.

(2) Ask the children to all repeat the word with you.

(3) State the meaning of the word using a child-friendly definition.

(4) Provide other examples of the word using contexts different from the storybook.

(5) Have the children again repeat the word with you.

(6) Ask the children to use the word in a sentence or to provide another example using the word.

(7) Have the children once again repeat the word with you.

After introducing a rare word to the children using "Text Talk," follow-up by adding the word to your table stand or vocabulary wall chart and by using the word in your conversations with children.

Text Talk can be used to teach any new vocabulary word; not just words from storybooks. The essence
of Text Talk is: define the word using a child-friendly definition, give examples, and have the children repeat the word several times.

For Dual Language Learners, use Advanced Language in the child's home language.
Children who are dual language learners need to be exposed to advanced language in their home language. Children who hear and use complex sentences and rare words in their home language are likely to later apply these skills and concepts to their second language.

"Many a low-income children entering kindergarten has heard only half the words and can understand only half the meanings and language conventions of a high-income child."
                                        ---Betty Hard and Todd Risley, Meaningful Difference