



Jugar y Aprender-Play and Learn: First Language Literacy and Parent Involvement

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According to the National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition (2015), in the 2011-12 school year, there were 4,472,563 English language learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools, making up 9 percent of all students in grades pre-k through 12. The most common language spoken by ELLs is Spanish, representing 80 % of the total number (National Clearing House for English Language Acquisition, 2015). In Texas, 15 % of K-12 students are ELLs and over 90% are Spanish speakers (Ruiz Soto, Hooker & Batalova, 2015). Despite growing numbers of Spanish speaking children, the shortage of bilingual teachers remains acute (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). This means that many Spanish speaking children are in classrooms with monolingual English speaking teachers who cannot provide extensive literacy instruction in the first language (L1).

L1 literacy plays a positive role in the development of second language literacy (Thomas & Collier, 1998). Reese, Garnier, Galimore & Goldenberg (2000) found that the existence of emergent literacy skills in Spanish at the kindergarten level were a “significant predictor of English reading ability eight years lat-

er” (p. 655). The transfer of literacy skills from L1 to L2 in young children is well-documented. (Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon & Davidson, 2013; August, Calderon & Carlo, 2000). For example, Feinauer, Hall-Kenyon and Davidson (2013) found that both unconstrained literacy skills (eg. comprehension and vocabulary) and constrained literacy skills (eg. letter knowledge and phonological awareness) transferred from L1 to L2. Findings such as these support Cummins’s Transfer Theory which states, “Academic proficiency transfers across languages such that students who have developed literacy in their first language will tend to make stronger progress in acquiring literacy in their second language” (Cummins, 2000, p. 173). Clearly, promoting literacy development in Spanish ultimately promotes literacy development in English.

There are steps that monolingual English speaking teachers can take to promote literacy development in Spanish. First, creating an atmosphere in the classroom that is welcoming to other languages is critical so that schooling is not viewed as only involving

English. Teachers can request books in Spanish and provide opportunities for ELLs to read the texts in the classroom. These books could also be sent home. Teachers can focus on letter/sound correspondences that are similar in both languages (Greybeck, Rueter & Petrón, 2011). However, there is little that a monolingual teacher can do to provide important literacy experiences in the native language like storytelling or literacy-related games which critical for young children. Parents can provide those sorts of experiences (Reese & Gallimore, 2000). Many Spanish speaking parents are willing to help, but cannot because literacy tasks are sent home in a language which the parents do not speak or read.

Involving parents in their children's education fosters academic success (Hill & Taylor 2004; Henderson & Berla, 1994). Hill and Craft (2003) stated, "Parental involvement in school assists young students in obtaining the necessary academic competencies for succeeding in school," (p. 74). Parental involvement includes assisting children with homework or supplemental learning activities at home (Hill & Taylor, 2004). The limited research that exists on parental involvement and ELLs urges educators to consider cultural relevance when engaging with parents (Panferov, 2010). Helping Spanish speaking parents turn common family activities into literacy experiences with their children may help teachers make a connection between school and home in culturally relevant ways. Auerbach (1989) stated,

As parents contribute to the development of the home language and culture, they build the foundation for their children's academic achievement, positive self-

concept, and appreciation for their multicultural heritage. By valuing and building on parents' strengths, the status of those strengths is enhanced (p. 178).

Latino parents have much to offer by providing the Spanish literacy experiences that monolingual English speaking teachers cannot.

In order to help monolingual English speaking teachers solicit the help of Spanish speaking parents in promoting first language literacy, a handout in Spanish of culturally relevant literacy games and activities for young children is provided. This handout can be given to Spanish speaking parents at back to school nights or as part of a parent newsletter. It serves to open an important line of communication between teachers and parents in language that Spanish speaking parents understand. The games and activities on the handout are described in English below.

Lotería - Bingo

Lotería is a traditional Latino game similar to Bingo which has words and pictures rather than numbers. This game is modified so that the person calling the cards emphasizes the beginning sound of the words and asks the children what the beginning letter or sound is.

Dichos - Proverbs

Dichos are to be an important source of moral lessons and wisdom in Latino culture. Having parents share *dichos* with their children continues this tradition. They are often metaphorical and children need to decipher figura-

tive language to understand them. They also can help develop vocabulary in Spanish.

Contar la historia de la familia con fotos
- Family photo storytelling

In *historia de la familia*, parents use family photos to tell stories about the people and events portrayed. Children will be exposed to new vocabulary and sequencing of events.

Veo, veo – I Spy

Veo, veo is a variation of I Spy that uses letters or sounds as clues. It is fun for children and can be played anywhere. For example, in the supermarket, the parents ask children to identify objects they see that begin with a particular sound or letter.

Bebeleche - Hopscotch

Bebeleche is exactly like hopscotch. However, letters of the alphabet can be used rather than numbers. Children can call out the letters as they land on them.

Novelas – Soap operas

Many Latino families watch *novelas* in the evenings. In this activity, the parents ask the children to describe characters or retell the story during commercials. This will also contribute to vocabulary development and sense of story.

Parents are children's first teachers and Spanish speaking parents are no exception. They are the guardians of the language and culture. Since L1 literacy is critical to academic success, monolingual English speaking teachers need to take steps to harness the linguistic talent of Spanish speaking parents. This can be done by providing parents with ideas to unite common, activities

with literacy experiences in culturally relevant ways.

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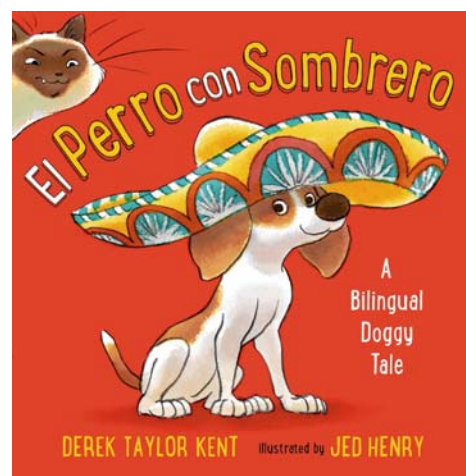
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Jugar y Aprender

Los padres son los primeros maestros

Los padres son los primeros maestros de los niños. No se debe de esperar hasta que los niños empiecen a asistir a la escuela para empezar a aprender. Hay muchas actividades que los padres pueden hacer en casa para ayudarles con la lecto-escritura. El desarrollo de la lectoescritura en español contribuye al aprendizaje de la lectoescritura en inglés.

Lotería con propósito



Para hacer este juego educativo la persona que anuncia cada tarjeta, puede hacerlo de tal manera “El melón,” y se les pregunta a los niños, “¿Con qué sonido empieza la palabra melón?”

Dichos

Los dichos son una fuente importante de la sabiduría de nuestra cultura.

Compartir refranes les beneficia a los niños porque continúa la tradición. Los niños tienen que descifrar el significado de cada uno. También es una manera de desarrollar el vocabulario del niño. Por ejemplo, “Camarón que se duerme, se lo lleva la corriente” o “Entre el dicho y el hecho, hay gran trecho.”

Contar la historia de la familia con fotos

Los padres sacan fotos de la familia y eventos importantes. Les cuentan la historia de la familia a los niños. Además, los niños desarrollan el orden de eventos en un cuento.

Veó, veó



Jugando veó, veó es muy divertido y se puede jugarlo en cualquier lugar. Por ejemplo, en el supermercado, los padres les dicen a los niños, “Veó, veó un objeto que empieza con el sonido “p.” Las respuestas posibles serán

plátano o pollo o pepino etcétera.

Bebeleche



Bebeleche es un juego en cual los niños se pueden divertir y a la vez aprender sus letras. En vez de dibujar los cuadros con números, los pueden hacer con letras. Cuando los niños brincan en los cuadros tienen que anunciar las letras.

Novelas

Casi a todas las familias hispanas les gustan las novelas. Durante los anuncios, los padres les piden a los niños que describan los personajes de la novela. Los padres pueden extender la descripción con palabras más complejas como el villano o el protagonista.