

# English Language Learners in Preschool: Language, Literacy, Cognition & Social Emotional Development

## English Language Learners in Preschool

by  
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*Language, Literacy, Cognition & Social Emotional Development*

Preschool children with a native language other than English, also known as English language learners (ELLs), comprise a very diverse group with unique backgrounds and needs. As the primary goal of preschool is to teach children how to learn, it is important for teachers to use the following activities to support these learners in their journey while they learn English. Research shows that when preschool teachers focus their attention on ensuring that ELLs develop basic foundational skills in language and literacy, the potential for these students to succeed is optimized. It is essential that educators working with these young learners make instructional decisions based on proven practices and solid research. This reference guide provides specific strategies for educators of preschool ELLs focusing on six key areas:

- Oral Language and Literacy
- Cultural Awareness
- Family Engagement
- Social and Emotional Growth
- Learning and Cognitive Skills
- Program Models and Strategies

### Oral Language and Literacy Development

A young learner's foundational literacy and language skills are a primary source of that child's ongoing strength and perseverance in learning. Teachers often view language minority children as simply low-performing native English-speaking children (Yates and Gitz 1991). Consequently, they shade the right curriculum, set low expectations for them, and even feel entitled to discriminate against them. This misconception negatively impacts ELLs and is one reason for the consistently low level of academic performance of many ELLs.

Parents should be encouraged to use the home language when possible. The student's native language has a positive effect on learning a second language. Research shows that for "emergent bilinguals" (children who are exposed to a language other than English at home), strategic use of home language promotes acquisition of English. In addition, preschool ELLs who attend schools with a language-rich focus, become better readers. Therefore, teachers must be strategic in their approaches to increasing the native language to optimize learning and learning.

TEACHERS	TABLES
SPEL: Oral language development MODALITY: Listening and Speaking COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Use short periods for reading aloud to students every day. Ask literal or "right there" questions; encourage students to explain the illustrations.	SPEL: Oral language development MODALITY: Listening and Speaking COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Read to your children every day. Make this a habit and living time; ask questions about the illustrations in the books.
SPEL: Comprehension MODALITY: Expressive and Receptive COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Use visual tools, such as pictures, thinking maps, gestures, and a variety of words and phrases to help children understand language.	SPEL: Comprehension MODALITY: Expressive and Receptive COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Encourage children to explore what things are, name objects, and discuss their purpose; this helps them understand language.
SPEL: Phonological awareness MODALITY: Listening and Reading COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Help children identify distinct sounds in spoken language as well as letter names and their sounds. COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Allow children to segment and to speech sounds to others in words, through hearing and analyzing distinct sounds as a cognitive skill.	SPEL: Phonological awareness MODALITY: Listening and Reading COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Help children identify where on letters and everyday items. Point to letters and environments to help children identify the beginning or end sounds of words. Your children generally begin to show initial phonological awareness when they demonstrate an appreciation of rhyme and alliteration.
SPEL: Language and the environment MODALITY: Treat children as if they are conversationalists. Encourage interaction among children COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Provide environments full of language development opportunities; promote natural language development.	SPEL: Language and the environment MODALITY: Make time to talk to children about daily events and the experiences that pertain to them. COGNITIVE STRATEGIES: Engage children in conversations with parents, grandparents or caregivers; children learn language by taking turns, looking attentively and interacting.

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**(Prof. Asia King)**

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