

Facilitating the Planning of Cross-Linguistic Transfer

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In the past few years there has been a compelling shift of perspectives in dual language pedagogy. We have moved from a place of “strict separation of languages” to an understanding that there are times when we can intentionally plan for teaching and learning that brings the two languages together in powerful and effective ways. This shift in pedagogy has been labeled in various manners: biliteracy instruction, facilitating cross-linguistic transfer, and teaching for cross-language connections are among the many labels.

As educators tackle new ways of teaching that bring both languages side by side, we are challenged to be even more thoughtful about how we plan our instructional units and lessons in both languages.

- How can we plan our units and lessons to maximize the transfer of concepts and language skills?
- What are the metalinguistic elements that are similar or different between and across the languages used in the lessons?
- How can we create a third space and time for the teaching and learning that brings the two languages together?

This can be challenging for any teacher, and it can be particularly demanding for teachers who share students, which is the case for many dual language teachers in 50/50 programs. This is the challenge that dual language teachers in Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) were confronted with as they took on the task of instructing for biliteracy in their classrooms.

ACPS is a medium-sized school district in northern Virginia with an increasingly culturally and linguistically diverse student population, of which the largest percentage of students identify as Hispanic. ACPS has been growing their dual language programs in the district for the last 20 years and currently has Spanish/English dual language programs in two of their elementary schools. Five years ago the district began an

instructional journey with OCDE Project GLAD® when three teachers attended a training in New Mexico to learn about protocols and strategies to accelerate academic language and content learning with second language learners. Those three teachers brought their excitement and skills back to their colleagues and district, and now over 250 ACPS teachers of language learners have been certified in OCDE Project GLAD®. Currently, ACPS has two OCDE Project GLAD® trainers of their own and is in the process of supporting more teachers in becoming trainers.

In addition to bringing OCDE Project GLAD® training into the district, ACPS has also worked with the Center for Teaching for Biliteracy (<http://www.teachingforbiliteracy.com/>). These two training protocols share common pedagogical philosophies of second language instruction including an emphasis on *thematic, language-focused instruction* that

- begins with highly comprehensible, concrete, interactive activities focused on developing academic oral language, or oracy, that prepare students to comprehend text;
- integrates content and literacy instruction; and
- includes strategies to support comprehension throughout the unit.

The Teaching for Biliteracy training aligned seamlessly with the OCDE Project GLAD® training and added the important lens of facilitating conceptual and cross-linguistic transfer for dual language teachers. This cross-linguistic transfer occurs during “the Bridge”—an instructional moment when teachers focus on connecting content and language learned in one language to the other. Together, these two protocols for professional learning provided ACPS dual language teachers with the tools needed to accelerate their students’ academic language and content learning in both English and Spanish and to provide their students with learning opportunities that validate and take advantage of the linguistic diversity in the district.

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With these complementary protocols in place, the challenge was now how to support teachers in their planning for and implementation of these ideas. As was already mentioned, most ACPS dual language teachers work in 50/50 programs with two teachers working in partnership—one English teacher and one Spanish teacher. Planning for biliteracy instruction between two teachers requires a system that includes both time for planning and a guide for the details of the planning. Anna Harvin, the Project GLAD® Program Specialist for ACPS, worked with DL instructional coaches in the district to create a “Bridge Planner” to help guide the planning conversation between DL teachers (see Figure 1).

carried out the instruction with the students (referenced as the L1 teacher) reviewing the standards of learning (SOLs) and vocabulary for the unit of study with the partner teacher (L2 teacher). This provides the L2 teacher with the language and the TPR (*total physical response* or gestures) to use while interactively creating a “side-by-side” or “Bridge” chart with the students to transfer key vocabulary from one language to the other (see Figure 2).

Figure 2

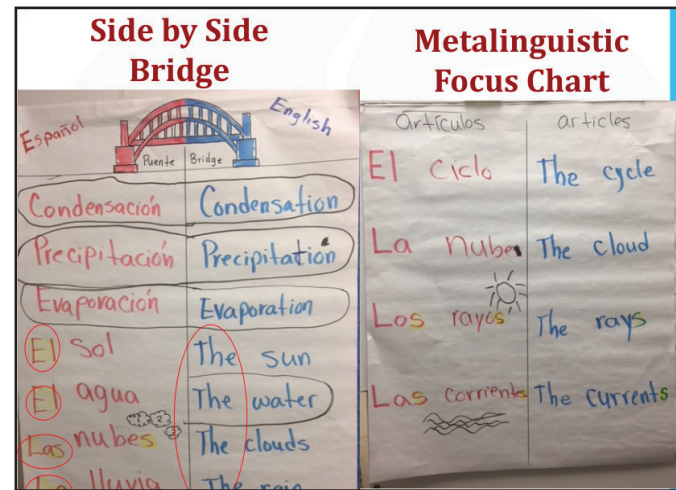


Figure 1

Bridge : 30 minutes of Planning “The Bridge”
It is recommended that this conversation occurs while planning the end of a unit

5 minutes	Unit Review L1 teacher reviews objectives (SOL's) from the unit that will end soon.				
5 minutes	Vocabulary <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L1 teacher discusses unit's vocabulary, so L2 teacher can prepare for the side-by-side chart. L1 teacher shows L2 teacher the TPR and chart to be used during the Bridge lesson. 				
10 minutes	Metalinguistic Focus L1 and L2 teachers discuss the metalinguistic focus. <table border="1" style="width: 100%; text-align: center;"> <tr> <td style="background-color: #4CAF50; color: white; padding: 5px;"> phonology <i>Sound System</i> <small>sound/symbol correspondence</small> Sound /k/ Sound /k/ Symbol c or k or ck Symbol c or qu </td> <td style="background-color: #9E9E9E; color: white; padding: 5px;"> morphology <i>Word Formation</i> <small>shared prefixes/suffixes</small> Suffix -ism Suffix -ismo socialism socialismo Prefix in- Prefix in- informal informal </td> </tr> <tr> <td style="background-color: #4285F4; color: white; padding: 5px;"> syntax/grammar <i>Sentence Structure</i> <small>word order</small> the red car el carro rojo </td> <td style="background-color: #FF9800; color: white; padding: 5px;"> pragmatics <i>Language Use</i> <small>cultural norms</small> you tú usted </td> </tr> </table>	phonology <i>Sound System</i> <small>sound/symbol correspondence</small> Sound /k/ Sound /k/ Symbol c or k or ck Symbol c or qu	morphology <i>Word Formation</i> <small>shared prefixes/suffixes</small> Suffix -ism Suffix -ismo socialism socialismo Prefix in- Prefix in- informal informal	syntax/grammar <i>Sentence Structure</i> <small>word order</small> the red car el carro rojo	pragmatics <i>Language Use</i> <small>cultural norms</small> you tú usted
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10 minutes	Extension Activities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L1 and L2 teachers plan 2-3 extension activities to reinforce transfer. L1 And L2 teachers decide if they are teaching them or if L2 will take the lead. 				
*	Notes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> L1 and L2 teachers talk about future use or connections to the topic. L1 and L2 teachers agree on who/how/when materials are prepared. 				

Step 3 of the planner involves the two teachers discussing the metalinguistic focus areas for the language that is being transferred. There are four metalinguistic areas for consideration:

1. Phonology—letter level
 - ◉ Sound and spelling patterns that are different in the two languages need to be explicitly taught. For example, the /th/ in English is not used in Spanish. Students may spell **that** or **brother** as **dat** or **broder**.
 - ◉ Sound and spelling patterns that are similar must also be taught. For example, the silent **h** in Spanish occurs at the beginning of words as in **horno**. English has many silent letters in different places in words. For example, **Christmas**, **name**, **muscle**.
2. Morphology—word level
 - ◉ Word formation rules exist in English but not in Spanish, and vice versa. For example, in Spanish suffixes can be pronouns: **Dame**. This does not happen in English.

This planner was designed to facilitate a 30-minute conversation between the two partner teachers as they approach the end of a thematic unit. Steps 1 and 2 of the conversation involve the teacher who

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- ◉ Some word formations are similar. For example, cognates like system/**sistema** and prefixes and suffixes such as capital**ism**/capital**ismo** and **predict**/**predecir**.
- 3. Syntax and Grammar—sentence level
 - ◉ There are many similarities between the languages. For example, the parts of speech in Spanish and English both include nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and prepositional phrases.
 - ◉ Some aspects of syntax and grammar are different. For example, articles and adjectives in Spanish have gender and number agreement, but they do not in English, **El** perro bravo, **Los** perros bravos, **The** fierce dog/dogs.
- 4. Language Use and Pragmatics—discourse and sociocultural level
 - ◉ There are cultural norms and contexts for language use in each language. For example,
 - Dichos/expressions/idioms
 - English: The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.
 - Spanish: **Tal palo, tal astilla.**
 - Cultural norms
 - English: You. Spanish: **Usted, Tú, o Vos.**
 - English: I'm hungry. Spanish: **Tengo hambre.**
 - ◉ Punctuation and capitalization
 - Accents and punctuation in Spanish can change word meaning. For example, **el papá, la papa, El Papa**, (the father, the potato and the Pope!).

Identifying the areas of metalinguistic focus allows the teachers to intentionally plan for the features of language that will be highlighted during the Bridge discussion with students. These features become the focus of the extension activity in which students use the new language that has been generated in academic conversations and written products. The planning of the extension activity takes place during step 5 of the conversation planner and can be continued to identify future connections to the learning and to discuss the creation of materials.

The 30-minute conversation planner sets the stage for a well-coordinated and intentional transfer of language while building the students metalinguistic awareness and skills. The importance of this planning

conversation cannot be underestimated. However, in addition to this planning it is paramount that there is also a system in place which creates the time and space to carry out this transfer. Here are the logistical details that ACPS DL teachers have wrestled with as they envisioned this system:

When: Time is put into the schedule to ensure that teaching for cross-linguistic transfer moves from being a good idea to becoming a regular part of instruction. Below is a range of time frames that ACPS dual language teachers have utilized:

- every Thursday for 30 minutes,
- every other week on an agreed-upon day, and
- at the end of each quarter.

If a teacher decides that the students are not ready for a transfer lesson, he or she can touch base with the partner teacher and reschedule.

Where: Most ACPS partner teachers have chosen to present "the Bridge" together, so they must decide to either bring the two classes together in one of their classrooms or find a third space.

How: Partner teachers need to plan out the transfer lesson by answering these questions:

- Who will take the lead?
- Which GLAD charts will be used?
- What is each teacher's role?
- What color marker will be used to record each language? (It is recommended that this is decided at the school level.)
- Where will each teacher stand? (It is also recommended that both the L1 and L2 teachers stand next to the work done in their respective languages to support the students' understanding of the similarities and differences between the two languages.)

The implementation of OCDE Project GLAD® protocols and strategies, integrated with an intentional plan to support the development of biliteracy knowledge and skills, has greatly enriched the academic content and language learning for dual language teachers and learners in ACPS. The focused efforts of Anna Harvin and the dedicated DL teachers she supports have put a system in place that provides intentionality and clarity to their practice.