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Teaching Emergent Bilingual Learners with Disabilities and Challenging Behaviors in Preschool


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Cover Page Footnote

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Challenging behaviors in young children can result from a variety of factors that may interact to make it difficult for teachers to find effective instructional solutions. The authors of this article provide an overview of research that focuses on understanding challenging behavior in young children. It describes a research-based model, the Pyramid model, intended to support the development of social competence in young children. Classroom practice suggestions with some vignettes are provided to illustrate how teachers may implement this model with children that experience challenging behaviors and ways in which their practice could be transformed. The article concludes with recommendations for teachers on different techniques they can use as proactive supports or interventions in order to prevent challenging behaviors from reoccurring in emergent bilingual preschoolers.

Keywords: emergent bilingual learners, challenging behavior, dual language, early childhood, multilingual education.

Supporting a preschool child whose behavior disrupts the classroom is difficult for any teacher. A disability and a different language can complicate the situation with additional challenges that make cross-discipline collaboration necessary (Chen & Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2013; Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2014). It is important for teachers to understand the complex challenges they may face when working with a child that has an identified disability and who is learning English as an additional language.

As researchers and practitioners, we believe that all children come to school to learn. In our estimation, effective teachers have the knowledge, strategies, and materials needed to respond to the diverse behaviors of young children and the confidence to change their practices to respond to each child's individual learning needs. In addition, the most effective programs focus on the whole child, rather than seeing a child as defined by one label or another (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Kochhar-Bryant & Heishman, 2010).

However, even in the best educational settings, challenging behavior in young children who are at risk of school failure, including young children who are emergent

bilinguals and/or children who may have learning disabilities, is a substantive concern for many teachers. The first months of preschool may be too early to accurately identify the factors that may be contributing to behaviors the teacher sees as challenging, but teaching and learning must proceed. Whether challenging behaviors arise from a disability, a language difference, or stressful experiences, or a combination, teachers need strategies they can use immediately and successfully to ensure each child's progress.

The purpose of the article is to describe a research-based model, the Pyramid model, intended to support the development of social competence in young children and its application in classrooms with young emergent bilinguals who exhibit challenging behaviors. These types of behaviors and the role of language in behavior are explained in the initial section of the article. An explanation of the Pyramid model is followed by suggestions for classroom instruction that implement the model. Final instructional insights are provided in the conclusion to the article.

Understanding Challenging Behaviors and the Role of Language in Behavior

Behavior is the broad term referring to the way someone acts or reacts to different situations, people, or stimuli. When we see an ongoing pattern of a child reacting to situations, people, and stimuli in ways that cause injury to themselves and others, or *damages* the physical environment, or *fails* to comply with expected actions, we refer to this as *challenging behavior*. Young children can use challenging behaviors as a way to communicate with us when they do not have the words to express themselves in any other way. The challenging behavior becomes the message that their needs are not being met or that something is not right.

When children enter preschool or kindergarten, they are still in the process of developing language. Teachers that are not familiar with the stages of second language development may misinterpret a child's behavior, attributing it to adjustment difficulties or developmental delays. Children's common behaviors at the early stages of second language development such as refusing to speak during the school day, or wandering away from activities because they do not understand what is happening, are important and must be noted. However, while these behaviors present challenges to teachers, they may simply be the child's reaction to being in a situation where people do not speak his language and activities are hard to understand (Brice, 2002; Tabors, 2008). To prevent confusing challenging behaviors that result from a disability from those that may be part of the normal process of language acquisition, it is important for teachers to be familiar with the stages of second language acquisition (Tabors, 2008).

- Continuing use of the home language
- Silent period (may appear like selective mutism in school or during certain parts of the day)
- Telegraphic or formulaic speech (child may say "iwantdat" to get something she needs, but may not yet be ready to say "I" and "want" and "that" as separate words)
- Informal language (full sentences in English may be produced and understood, but the child still understands and expresses some information)

in the home language)

- Full academic fluency (when child is able to rely fully on the new language to learn and express learning) (Cummins, 1991; Tabors 2008)

Even as young children progress through the stages of first and second language development, the way they use their language resources in every day interactions is actually quite fluid. While children continue to develop both languages their individual experiences and abilities influence the way they use words from each language as needed to facilitate understanding and communication. This process is called “translanguaging” (García, Makar, Starcevic, & Terry, 2011) and it is observed in children across the range of disabilities and abilities. It is normal for all young emergent bilinguals to put together words from both languages to meet their communication needs, although monolingual teachers may find this a bit confusing. While the instincts of monolingual teachers, special education specialists, and therapists may be to teach one language or the other, the focus for all children in the early years needs to be on the development of overall effective communication skills and content learning in both languages.

The stress of being separated from family – possibly for the first time - in a new school with a new language may be a trigger for a child’s challenging behavior, or it may be the language difference that masks different problems such as adjustment issues or developmental delay. There are no quick fixes or easy answers that will help extinguish the challenging behaviors. Ideally, programs should not have to choose between special education supports, language supports, content learning, and behavioral supports. Just as multiple factors work together to influence the child’s behavior, multiple and coordinated supports will be needed to address that behavior. The goal must be to support the whole child rather than to break down his challenges into isolated parts. The Pyramid Model, described below, proposes to achieve a more holistic intervention for these children.

Responding to Challenging Behaviors through the Pyramid Model

In order to be proactive and prevent challenging behaviors in young children, classrooms and schools are implementing research-based frameworks, such as the Pyramid Model, to support the development of social competence in young children (Fox & Hemmeter, 2009). The Pyramid Model was developed with all children in mind, and the strategies are equally applicable for children who experience speech or language delays, cognitive developmental delays, physical disabilities, or children who are simply adapting to learning in a new language (Yates et al., 2008). This model was developed by researchers at two national, federally-funded research and training centers: The Center for the Social and Emotional Foundations for Early Learning (CSEFEL) and the Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention (TACSEI) beginning in 2003, and conforms to a Response to Intervention tiered approach (promotion, prevention, and intervention) with emphasis on social interactions for children 2-5 years olds (Fox, Carta, Strain, Dunlap, & Hemmeter, 2009).

In the following paragraphs we identify the main components of the model and then illustrate some practices that emerge from the model. Four tiers comprise the model. The first two tiers focus on the promotion of quality, nurturing relationships

with teachers and other caregivers, and the use of high quality environments. They also highlight the developmentally appropriate practices outlined by the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children's *Recommended Practices in Early Intervention/Early Childhood Special Education* as well as National Association of the Education of Young Children's (NAEYC) Early Childhood Program Standards and Accreditation Criteria (Cimino, Forrest, Smith, & Stainback-Tracy, 2007; Smith, 2008).

If the relationships and environmental supports are not enough for children at risk, more targeted secondary prevention strategies to promote social development are implemented (Smith, 2008). Finally, at the top of the Pyramid Model, child specific intervention strategies can be implemented for children with persistent challenging behaviors (Fox et al., 2009; Fox & Smith, 2007; Smith 2008).

The Pyramid Model for Supporting Social Emotional Competence in Infants and Young Children identifies a framework of interventions to support the social, emotional, and behavioral development of young children (Fox, Dunlap, Hemmeter, Joseph & Strain, 2003; Hemmeter, Ostrosky, & Fox, 2006). The interventions and strategies in the Pyramid Model are recommended to help teach children with disabilities the social and emotional skills needed to be effectively included in the least restrictive environment (Fox et al., 2009).

Research on the implementation of the Pyramid Model has found that using the strategies found within the bottom three tiers can help teachers adapt and modify challenging behaviors effectively in all children, even before individualized assessments and evaluations provide any additional information needed (Fox & Hemmeter, 2014; Yates et al., 2008). These strategies, identified below, can be used in early learning classrooms with young children who are both emergent bilingual learners and have identified disabilities with behaviors that prove to be challenging for teachers. The purpose in describing the strategies is to guide teachers and other professionals in understanding the complex issues of emergent bilinguals with disabilities who are exhibiting challenging behavior.

Traditional special education methods alone may not work and must be adapted to meet the unique needs of children who are also emergent bilinguals. The issues surrounding the disabling condition and the language needs must be considered together as interventions are built and implemented in collaboration with the other educators and specialists (Brillante, 2014). The Pyramid Model supports teachers by describing four tiers of evidence-based interventions they can use in diverse classrooms.

Tier 1 and Tier 2

The foundation of the Pyramid Model is twofold, first is the development of nurturing relationships with teachers and other caregivers, and second is the use of developmentally appropriate practices in the classroom as outlined by NAEYC's Position Statement on Developmentally Appropriate Practices (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009; Fox et al., 2009). Specifically, these are learning activities, lessons, and interactions that are appropriate to each child's age and developmental level, that are responsive to each child's interests, and are responsive to the child's language and culture, within the context of any curriculum (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). We list

some of the recommended strategies for the initial two tiers below.

1. For children with disabilities, developmentally appropriate classrooms feature a clear intent on providing access, participation, and supports for young children with disabilities in their least restrictive environment (DEC/NAEYC, 2009).
2. Teachers need to help preschool children develop knowledge of essential concepts in a child's home language, which will help the child frame the new concept into the familiar language and cultural context (NAEYC, 2009). This practice of having the teachers learn essential concepts in the child's home language is not to be disregarded just because the child has a disability (Espinosa, 2008).
3. Relationships with peers who speak other languages need to be fostered by developing common language that children can use to communicate with each other and by teaching everyone about the language and culture of the members of the class. This strategy stresses the importance of social development between children. Language barriers and developmental disabilities can impede social interactions in the classroom. Some programs use a two-way dual language immersion approach to foster bilingualism and biliteracy among all of the children in the class. Other programs emphasize learning English as the common language. Other strategies include communication supports such as American Sign Language or picture communication boards.

Tier 3

For children with more significant needs, the Pyramid Model suggests more targeted supports to prevent some of the challenging behavior (Fox et al., 2003; Hemmeter et al., 2006). Teachers may need additional strategies to adapt recommendations that were designed for monolingual classrooms. Whenever a solution entails explicit instruction, consideration must be given to the dilemma of teachers and children not speaking the same language. Teachers will need to be intentional about helping emergent bilinguals learn social skills – either through direct instruction, or careful modeling and Social Stories® in the home languages of the children.

1. Teachers are advised to provide direct instruction on skills such as how to initiate and maintain interactions with peers; problem solving within social situations; handling disappointment and anger; and expressing emotions and feelings in appropriate ways (Strain & Joseph, 2006). When the students do not understand the teacher's language, this advice may be hard to follow. Teaching the targeted skills to the whole class can increase the opportunities children with language barriers and developmental delays have to model the appropriate behaviors.
2. Using Social Stories® featuring the children in the classroom can help reinforce the targeted behaviors during times when the child is not engaging in challenging behaviors.

- Social Stories® were first developed in 1991 by Carol Gray to improve weak social skills typically found in people with high functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder. Gray and Attwood (2010) explain that the individualized stories highlight a challenging social situation and provide the relevant social cues for that situation. In addition, these stories highlight the perspectives of the other people in the social situation, and provide the appropriate response the reader would need in that social situation. The use of Social Stories® to teach appropriate interaction and targeted behavior for preschoolers with challenging behaviors is becoming common in preschool classrooms (Delano & Stone, 2008). The format of these individualized stories can be adapted to use with preschool students with disabilities and dual language needs. Offering Social Stories® in the home language of each child in the class can significantly enhance the teacher's ability to reach all of the children with the skills they need to learn. When these linguistically appropriate stories are available in the classroom, visitors and volunteers who speak the home languages of the children will have a valuable resource to read and discuss with the children who are emergent bilinguals.
3. Playing cooperatively with peers is a key element of the third tier of the pyramid, however, Chang et al., (2007) found that in classrooms where half the children speak English and half speak Spanish, more behavior issues including bullying and teasing of the Spanish speakers were likely to occur when the teacher did not speak any Spanish. According to these researchers, when the teachers spoke some Spanish, even for a portion of the day, the conditions in the classrooms changed, reducing challenging behaviors from children of both languages. Furthermore, Kohnert and Derr (2012) synthesized relevant research and recommended that children with language and/or cognitive impairments will do best when they receive interventions that support both their home language and English. This recommendation is also included in the position statement of the Division for Early Childhood (DEC) of the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC), 2010.
 4. It is key to understand that there is no evidence that learning in two languages is detrimental for children with developmental or language delays (CEC, 2010; Hambly & Fombonne, 2012). In other words, support for a child's home language should not be considered optional. That does not mean every teacher has to become fully fluent in all of the languages of her students. Small steps such as reading stories, learning to use a few words to meet basic needs, or singing songs in the non-English languages can help (Castro, Espinosa, & Paéz, 2011; Pandey, 2012). The goal for all early childhood educators should be to support meaningful conversations and content learning in the home languages of young children while also helping them make connections with English (U.S. Department of Health and Human services & U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Learning some key words that help children feel more understood and welcome to the new classroom environment is just a first step in this process.

Tier 4

For children with persistent challenging behaviors that do not respond to the interventions in Tier 1 and 2, or Tier 3, more individualized, comprehensive interventions may be required. As described by Fox and Hemmeter (2009), Tier 4 will assist teachers in developing and implementing individualized plans that intensively address challenging behaviors.

1. The individualized Tier 4 process begins with a functional behavioral assessment (FBA) designed to understand why the behavior is occurring. The FBA must begin with establishing a multidisciplinary team that can provide different perspectives about the interfering behavior. Essential members of this team include staff members that are familiar with how the disability is impacting the child's access and participation in the curricular activities as well as the supports that are currently in place. It is also essential for the team to have someone who is familiar with both the child's home language and the cultural expectations of the family and community. The team identifies interfering behaviors as the target for the observations and interventions. Extensive observations are completed to help understand the various factors related to ongoing challenging behaviors. Functional assessments can be complex when focusing on both the role of the disability and how that impacts behavior as well as the role of the child's language and culture. Identifying the function of the behavior for children who have disabilities in addition to having dual language needs is a necessary step before designing interventions to replace the behavior with more appropriate behaviors that meet the same goal.
2. For preschool aged children who have disabilities and are learning in two languages, identifying the function of the challenging behavior can be difficult. Teachers will need to look at the problem from many different angles. The disability may be inhibiting developmental and social growth. The language difference may make it difficult for the child to understand the demands being placed on them. The child may only have a limited selection of words in each language they can use when interacting with peers and adults, which will limit the ability of the peers and adults to understand their communicative intent. When the child has no easy way to communicate their wants and needs, engaging in challenging behavior may be an effective alternative form of communication for them.
3. Within Tier 4, plans are designed to teach new skills that replace challenging behavior. One evidence-based practice is the use of functional communication training (FCT; Durán, Hartzheim, Lund, Simonsmeier, & Kohlmeier, 2016; Franzone, 2009). This practice will help determine what the child is trying to communicate and replace the challenging behavior with more conventional forms of communication (e.g., pointing, picture exchange, signing, and verbalizations) that are appropriate for the developmental needs as well as the language barrier (Mancil, Conroy, Nakao, & Alter, 2006; Nathan & Gorman, 2002). As with any intervention, the intervention team

must be aware of, and make adaptations for, the ethnic and cultural differences of the children and their families.

Recommendations for Implementing Strategies

Challenging behaviors can interfere with learning new skills and even making and keeping friends, so it is essential that teachers understand the evidenced based practices that are based in years of research they can implement in order to provide the supports children exhibiting challenging need, and proactively preventing challenging behaviors in the future.

The following recommendations for teachers are based on the research on effective instruction for young children (National Research Council, 2001), as well as effective strategies connected to the PBS model of promotion, prevention, and intervention (Dunlap, Kincaid, Horner, Knostrer, & Bradshaw, 2014).

Revising Expectations

Tier 1 of the Pyramid Model is the first step in helping students with challenging behaviors (Fox et al., 2009). Setting a solid foundation requires the teacher to both understand and adjust classroom expectations based on the developmental level of the child and the language ability in each of his or her languages. The environment and the activities should be stimulating and supportive of the developmental levels as well as the home languages in the classroom (Nemeth, 2009). Teachers may need to revise their own expectations or develop a plan with other professionals in the school to teach specific skills. Work on skills the child needs to use in the classroom should be addressed at times when the child is not exhibiting challenging behaviors, and may need to happen when they are with different teachers or specialists. Specifically helping the child learn a variety of ways to express feelings, wants, or needs can result in giving them alternatives that reduce their use of challenging behaviors (Roben, Cole & Armstrong, 2012). The following fictional vignette describes the example of the experiences of a new teacher we will call Hamidah and how she changed her expectations of the students in her classroom.

Hamidah was excited that she had been hired for her first job as a preschool teacher. She was comfortable in the classroom and she spoke fluent Arabic. She was sure she would be able to help the three typically developing students in the classroom who were native Arabic speakers, but some of the students in the class were native Spanish speakers, and Hamidah did not speak Spanish. The other problem was there were six students in the class that had developmental disabilities, including two of the students that only spoke Spanish and one that was a native Arabic speaker. Hamidah had some training in college about making adaptations for students with disabilities, but not for students with disabilities that did not speak English. She reviewed the student's IEPs and planned a course of action with her supervisor. She decided to learn some key words in Spanish by practicing with several children's bilingual storybooks that came with CDs. This gave her a starting point of words she needed to begin the year and the children loved helping her learn. Slowly but surely, she made sure that the students in her

class who were developmentally disabled had the same preschool experiences as the rest of the children in the class.

In this example, it becomes clear that teachers could adopt effective strategies, even when they are new to the field or lack specialized preparation. Revising and changing attitudes, support from administrators, and availability of information about best practices can all contribute to successful adaptations for each individual child.

Embedding Home Languages in Classroom Environment and Services

Throughout their day, children have both planned and unplanned opportunities for learning (Dunst, Bruder, Trivette, Raab, & McLean, 2001). Embedding language supports for children into the routines and activities of the child's day reinforces the idea that the more opportunities a child has to practice new skills in context; the more those new skills will be used across settings (McWilliam, 2010). Teaching these skills in the environments where they will be used is an important part of the puzzle. Buisse and Bailey (1993) reported behavioral and social benefits when supports are embedded into the classroom routines rather than provided in pull out services.

A child's home language is a resource that can be used to help reduce challenging behaviors (Castro, Espinosa, & Paéz, 2011; Goldenberg, 2008). Rather than being viewed as a deficit, the home language should be used to increase learning and to support the child in the multilingual classroom (Cheatham, Armstrong, & Santos, 2009; García et al., 2011; Puig, 2010). Keeping Tier 1 of the Pyramid Model in mind, the use of visual and multilingual supports will help all members of the class. Adding photos to all labels can help children learn the words and connect them to the languages of their peers, which in turn strengthens the social bond between classmates (Thelan & Klifman, 2011). Pictures, standardized icons, graphics organizers, props, and video are other examples of visual supports that facilitate learning and communication in multi-ability and multilingual classrooms.

When bilingual teachers work with students that speak their languages, they can support communication and learning in both English and non-English language. This supports bilingual development of all children, including children with disabilities, whether they start with English or not. When language matches are not possible, the goal of true bilingual education with support for translanguaging will not be within reach. Administrators, teachers, and special education professionals must create a language plan that guides practices to fit the individualized needs of the children with the resources available at the school. This may mean making compromises or learning new strategies to improve effectiveness of teaching young children with disabilities who are dual language learners and reducing conditions that can lead to challenging behaviors.

Monolingual teachers can use a variety of materials to help them support other languages in the classroom (Chen & Gutiérrez-Clellen, 2013). Add books in the home languages to the library and read them to the class as a way to build the teacher's vocabulary in the languages of the students. Teachers can ask a parent to record a story to play back to the class to demonstrate that the class accepts and encourages the home language. Have the children or families teach everyone key words that are used daily (Nemeth, 2009). This makes for a much more welcoming environment. These are

beginning steps used by teachers who need to create that environment even when they do not know the languages spoken by the children. Once survival words have been used, additional language learning will help the teacher do more to connect with the students.

Similar approaches should be implemented by any of the specialists who may be involved in working with the child, including speech therapists, special education specialists, occupational therapists, and social workers. In order for these strategies to be implemented effectively they should be part of a comprehensive language plan that is supported by administrators. Factors must be taken into account such as the number of children who speak each language, the availability of teachers who speak the languages of the children, and the availability of books, learning materials, and assessments in those languages. Many teachers are overwhelmed at the prospect of having to learn new languages. Support of administrators can include additional release time, stipends for courses or language software, and opportunities for staff to support each other. Changing the environment can be that one intervention that can make a significant difference in the life of a child.

Watching Teacher Language

Several studies point to the advantages of providing true bilingual learning that employs the principles of translanguaging and encourages the continuing development of both of the child's languages (Barnett et al., 2007; García et al., 2011; USHHS & USDOE, 2016). This framework depends on the availability of a balanced group of language learners with properly qualified teachers who speak each language. With the increase of the number of students with disabilities included into general education classes, and the number of home languages in many classes, this set of balanced circumstances is not commonly available. Administrators must look for the most effective way to work within the limitations of the circumstances that are present in their programs. This may mean more than two languages in a classroom, or teachers whose languages do not match the languages of their students, or monolingual teachers being assigned to multilingual classrooms, or bilingual teachers who may not be versed in special education practices.

According to NAEYC (2009), the teachers should make sure the child is learning the essential concepts in the home language. The teachers should learn key words in each child's home language, then establish activities and routines that will give everyone opportunities to practice those words in multiple situations (Nemeth, 2009). When speaking in a non-English language, the teacher should have plenty of practice and place pronunciation reminders in convenient locations around the room (Nemeth, 2009; Tabors, 2008). Repeating key words to support understanding and use gestures, body language, and visual cues will aid communication (Tabors, 2008). In their review of research on interventions for emergent bilinguals with disabilities, Chen and Gutiérrez-Clellen (2013) found that children who received some support of their home language progressed faster in their learning of a second language than children who were taught using only the second language.

Embedding practices from Tier 2 of the Pyramid model will help the teacher design more global interventions that will support all of the students in the class. Social

Stories® can be a visual support that helps teachers to use the same key phrases in both the home language as well as English. This consistency will help students learn the replacement behaviors in both the home language and English (Kohnert & Derr, 2012). Other interventions include teachers making a clear effort to take time to stop and make eye contact with the child they are talking to so that both can pick up nonverbal cues from each other that will facilitate interactions (Brice, 2002; Tabors 2008). It is best to use informative feedback such as “I see you gave Joe one of your cookies,” rather than general praise like “good job.” It may be effective for teachers to develop a plan for which times of day, or during which activities they will use English and when they will use the home language(s). This will vary based on the students, the teacher’s own language proficiencies, the school’s instructions, and the resources available. Every teacher should watch their own language and the language used by other adults in the classroom to make sure they are providing consistency for the students in the class. Every teacher should watch their own language and the language used by other adults in the classroom to make sure they are providing consistency for the students in the class, as it was for Mrs. Clancy in the following fictional vignette.

Mrs. Clancy found herself paying attention to the language spoken by the teacher aides in the classroom. She listened intently to how they corrected classroom behaviors. They used phrases like "Stop it now," and "play nice," and she realized that the children did not know what those expectations entailed. She decided to do a role-playing scenario using a Social Story® first during circle time, and then in small groups. She would role-play fighting in the block area and not sharing in the art area. She would then read the Social Story® several times a week, using consistent language to demonstrate her expectations in each play center. She included her aides in the role-playing and story reading to encourage them to learn the language she wanted them to use.

In this example, the role of paraprofessionals in supporting the language, learning, and behavioral needs of individual children is highlighted. Teachers can use role play and a Social Story® to model both solutions and prevention strategies for both paraprofessionals and children in a collaborative early learning setting.

Adapting Teaching Strategies

Reducing the use of whole group meeting time in favor of small group and one on one interaction can be an effective change to reduce challenging behaviors in the classroom (LaForett, Fettig, Peisner-Feinberg, & Buysse, 2012). This individualized use of Tier 3 strategies is effective when the teacher understands the function of the behavior and is actively teaching replacement skills that meet the same function (Mancil et al., 2006). Replacement behaviors can be taught and reinforced using non-verbal cues (e.g., facial expressions, signs, gestures) that model and enrich communication. Maintaining a predictable classroom schedule and using visual supports so the child understands what is coming next will help the child to participate. Adding props, photos, and other graphic representations will help bring meaning to interactions (Nemeth, 2009). This is especially important during classroom transitions when saying a few words in English will not help a child who may have language-based disabilities and does not understand the language. Using a classroom buddy as well as

visual and auditory prompts to consistently support the child will be the most effective combination of strategies (Thelan & Klifman, 2011).

It is important to make language input easy to understand. Some authors (Tabors, 2008; Strain & Joseph, 2006) posit that teachers should help the children in the class communicate with their peers who are emergent bilinguals – teach them to speak slowly, be patient, repeat their message, and use nonverbal cues like pointing, showing, and demonstrating. These strategies are illustrated in the last fictional vignette.

Hamidah decided to add a classroom visual schedule to the room. She made the symbols for the extended times of the day larger than the symbols for the shortened time of day to help children learn that the bigger the symbol, the longer they would have for that activity. While this was a great strategy to teach all the children about the passage of time and the routine of the day, Kalila was still demonstrating challenging behavior during some of these times. Hamidah developed an individual visual schedule, using words in her home language that she and the other adults in the room could use until Kalila understood the transitions and participated with no challenging behaviors. Hamidah slowly faded this individualized supports until it was no longer needed.

This process of adding intensive supports to address a particular need, then fading them out as the child adapts to the classroom routine is an example of scaffolding that can resolve or prevent challenging behavior for a young child who is new to the program and is an emergent bilingual.

Conclusion

Children with disabilities who exhibit challenging behaviors and who come from different language backgrounds present some of the most complex issues in early childhood education. Understanding and finding the function of challenging behaviors for a preschool student with disabilities and dual language needs is difficult, but not impossible. It may not be necessary, or even possible to strictly identify which behaviors result from language differences and which result from disabilities or learning differences. Using supports and strategies based on research as well as recommendations found in the Pyramid Model can help teachers understand the function of the challenging behavior and design more effective replacement behaviors. Having all the professionals on the school team collaborate to design behavioral interventions that strengthen the home-school partnership, will ultimately increase ownership and use of those interventions (Lohrmann & Malley, 2015).

Remediating a child's special education needs should not exclude the dual language needs. Facilitating home language development will effectively assist the child with developmental disabilities in actively participating in the routines and activities at home and in the classroom (Espinosa, 2008; USHHS & USDOE, 2016). This active participation will reduce the need for the child to use challenging behavior as a form of communication. High quality early education for all children depends on every educator's ability to honor and respect each child's individual personality, ability, language, and cultural background.

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