

# Dimensions

of Early Childhood

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Special  
Issue

PLAY

What are We Going To Do?: Problem Solving in Sociodramatic Play

Everyone Plays!: Recapturing Play for Children with Special Needs

Let's Play: Building Oral Competencies of English Learners  
in K-3 Settings Through Playful Activities

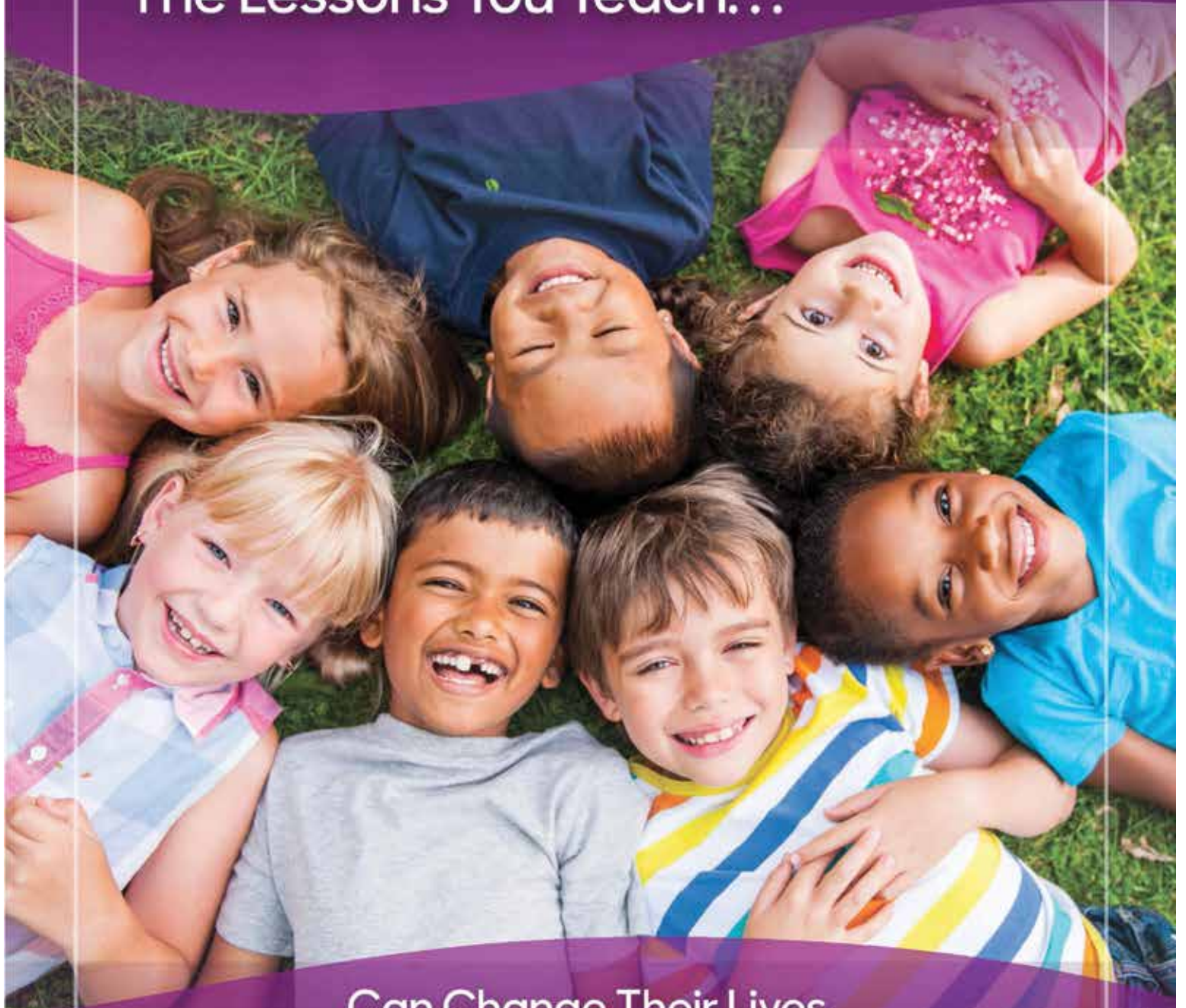
Vamos a jugar: Desarrollando las competencias de lenguaje oral a través  
del juego con los niños que aprenden inglés en las aulas de K-3

A Toolbox for Engaging Children in Play and Creativity for Learning Across the Domains

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**Southern  
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**Editor:** Wilma Robles-Melendez, PhD  
*Dimensions of Early Childhood*

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# Fresh Starts, New Beginnings!

**Judy Whitesell**

The New Year is here, and it always seems to mean new change, challenges and beginnings. As your new SECA president, I want you to know that our board members are already exploring opportunities to grow and expand our services to better support you. I once read, "The moment you stop accepting challenges is the moment you stop moving forward" (anonymous). Our board chooses to accept challenges as we collectively support and enhance opportunities for children and families we serve. Our rich history guides us as we appreciate and value each member and the expertise that each of you brings to our organization. Our thanks to leaders in the past who thoughtfully and intentionally created the organization we have today.

Your voice is welcomed and important. We encourage you to join us and accept the same challenge to improve and grow. Additionally, I would like to personally invite you to attend the upcoming SECA/SCECA conference February 3-5, 2022 in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. We have a fun and informative conference planned just for you! I hope to meet and work with each of you!

El nuevo año está aquí, y siempre significa nuevos cambios, desafíos y comienzos. Como su nueva Presidenta de SECA, quiero que sepan que nuestros miembros de la junta ya están explorando oportunidades para crecer y expandir nuestros servicios para apoyarlos mejor. Una vez leí: "El momento en que dejas de aceptar desafíos es el momento en que dejas de avanzar" (anónimo). Nuestra junta acepta los desafíos mientras nos enfocamos colectivamente en apoyar y mejorar las oportunidades para los niños y las familias mientras servimos a quienes trabajan y colaboran directamente con ellos. Nuestra rica historia nos guía a apreciar y valorar a cada miembro y los conocimientos que cada uno de ustedes aporta a nuestra organización. Nuestro agradecimiento a los líderes que en el pasado de manera reflexiva e intencional crearon la organización que tenemos hoy.

Su voz es bienvenida e importante. Te animamos a que te unas a nosotros y aceptes retos para mejorar y crecer. Además, me gustaría invitarlo personalmente a asistir a la próxima conferencia SECA / SCECA del 3 al 5 de febrero de 2022 en Myrtle Beach, Carolina del Sur. ¡Tenemos una conferencia divertida e informativa planeada solo para ti! ¡Espero conocer y trabajar con cada uno de ustedes!

## EDITOR'S MESSAGE/MENSAJE DE LA EDITORA

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# Play is for Every Child

**Wilma Robles-Melendez, PhD**

Winter brings the magic of a time filled with play and fun childhood activities. Playful experiences both at home and in the classroom, remains as an activity all children need as they grow and develop. Play remains as the activity that engages children in exploring, creating and building their interest in learning. Recognize as an integral right that children have, play is a universal experience for all children. This time, our special issue focuses the topic of play, and we want to take this opportunity to thank all of the authors who responded to our call for manuscripts. The response proved that play continues to be a central topic in early education. The guest editors have selected articles that will help in reaffirming the role and need for play in early childhood. They are also a source of ideas and resources to support what you do in the classroom and what you share with families. And always remember, play is for every child!

El invierno trae la magia de una época llena de juegos y divertidas actividades infantiles. Las experiencias lúdicas tanto en el hogar como en el aula continúan siendo una actividad que todos los niños necesitan a medida que crecen y se desarrollan. El juego sigue siendo la actividad que involucra a los niños en la exploración, creación y construcción de su interés en el aprendizaje. Reconocido como un derecho integral que tienen los niños, el juego es una experiencia universal para la niñez. Esta vez, nuestro número especial se centra en el tema del juego, y aprovechamos para agradecer a todos los autores que respondieron a nuestro llamado para el envío de manuscritos, lo cual demostró que el juego sigue siendo un tema central en la educación temprana. Los editores invitados han seleccionado artículos que ayudarán a reafirmar el papel y la necesidad de juego en la primera infancia. También son una fuente de ideas y recursos para apoyar lo que haces en el aula y lo que compartes con las familias. Y recuerda siempre, ¡el juego es para todos los niños!



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## Special Focus: Play Essential for Children's Development

**Kenya Wolff, Dina Costa-Treff, and Karen Walker**

"Play is often talked about as if it were a relief from serious learning. But for children play is serious learning. Play is really the work of childhood,"  
- Fred Rogers

Play brings joy, reduces stress and builds connection. It is also instrumental in supporting healthy development throughout the early childhood years and beyond (Van Hoorn et al., 2015; Ginsburg, 2007). In past generations, play was a child-initiated, open-ended activity. But for today's generation of children, free-play time is in a steady decline. In fact, with an increase in organized children's activities, technology-based toys, academic push-down into the early years and parental concerns related to safety, play has suffered. This has many early childhood experts concerned. We know that play is a critical brain building experience (Frost et al., 2012) and it is a common experience for children across cultures and ethnicities (Edwards, 2000).

This special issue is aimed at addressing play and the many ways it contributes to support children's learning and development. In the first article, *What are we going to do?- Problem solving in socio-dramatic play*, Patricia Becker posits that sociodramatic play provides an authentic context for children to engage actively in problem solving scenarios. These play-based scenarios complement early childhood curricula designed to teach problem-solving skills explicitly. Becker shares examples of these themes and linguistic references, and provides specific strategies for teachers to plan, model, and scaffold problem solving before, during, and after sociodramatic play.

In the second article, *Let's Play: Building Oral Competencies of English Learners in K-3 Settings Through Playful Activities*, authors Elke Schneider and Andrea Kulmhofer-Bommer aim to (1) assist educators in better understanding the diverse social and academic learning needs of English Learners (EL) in their varying language acquisition and acculturation stages, and (2) introduce EL-specific, playful oral language learning activities that are student-centered and align with EL-specific standards (TESOL International Association, 2006) and identified accommodations (Ariza & Coady, 2018). These research-evidenced and-field tested playful oral language learning activities (POLLAs) are easy to

infuse in existing curricula. The educator oral language support information for each activity provides sentence frames for oral dialog to explicitly practice with students.

In the third article, *Everyone Plays! Recapturing Play for Children with Special Need* authors Lin Moore and Elaine Zweig share strategies for including children with disabilities in play. For a variety of reasons, these children may lack the skills needed to appropriately engage in play with their peers. When teachers are mindful, they can look for opportunities to help children with special needs strengthen these skills. Modeling, scaffolding, and offering suggestions with words or materials are just a few of the ways to promote access for full inclusion.



In the fourth article, *A Toolbox for Engaging Children in Play and Creativity for Learning Across The Domains*, authors Josh Thompson and Kristen Pearce provide several vignettes of children in play, allowing readers to have a peek at the play and creativity taking place. As the child engages in play, they are not only involved in the experiences but also creating and molding their sense of self and identity. Thompson and Pearce reveal a toolbox for engaging children's play and creativity for learning across the developmental domains. Planning for and providing the opportunities for play is of high importance. The provided toolbox will be very beneficial for fostering play in all settings, including home or school.

In the *Milestones* section, Dee Ray, director of the Center for Play Therapy at the University of North Texas, shares information on play therapy, a form of mental health intervention for young children that is proven to be effective. She explains how it works and how to find a therapist.

As guest editors, we hope you find this issue on play of interest as you determine how your work will support Southern children and families in this most challenging time. By being a champion



for play, you are helping preserve a children's right to develop skills and engage in opportunities that will help them be successful in school and in life. Each of us, as we are sure our readers are able to as well, can look back on our life, and remember fondly all of the moments of engaging in play. Whether it be from our youth to adulthood, in the classroom or outside, play has provided us with the ability to experience the world around us and to learn from each experience.

.....

"A menudo se habla del juego como si fuera un alivio del aprendizaje serio. Pero para los niños jugar es un aprendizaje serio. El juego es realmente el trabajo de la infancia". - Fred Rogers

El juego trae alegría, reduce el estrés y crea conexiones. También es fundamental para apoyar el desarrollo saludable a lo largo de los primeros años de la infancia y más allá (Van Hoorn et al., 2015; Ginsburg, 2007). En las generaciones pasadas, el juego era una actividad abierta iniciada por los niños. Pero para la generación actual de niños, el tiempo de juego libre está en un constante declive. De hecho, con un aumento en las actividades organizadas para niños, los juguetes tecnológicos, la presión académica, y las preocupaciones de los padres sobre la seguridad al jugar, el juego ha sufrido. Esto preocupa a muchos expertos del nivel temprano. Sabemos que el juego es una experiencia crítica de desarrollo cerebral (Frost et al., 2012) y es una experiencia común para los niños de todas las culturas y etnias (Edwards, 2000).

Este número especial tiene como objetivo abordar el juego y las formas en que contribuye a apoyar el aprendizaje y el desarrollo de los niños. En el primer artículo, *¿Qué vamos a hacer? Resolución de problemas en el juego sociodramático*, Patricia Becker postula que el juego socio dramático proporciona un contexto auténtico para que los niños participen activamente en escenarios de resolución de problemas. Estos escenarios basados en el juego complementan los currículos de educación temprana diseñados para el desarrollo de destrezas de resolución de problemas. Becker comparte ejemplos de estos temas y referencias lingüísticas y proporciona estrategias específicas para que los maestros planifiquen, modelen y resuelvan problemas antes, durante y después del juego socio dramático.

En el segundo artículo, *Let's Play: Building Oral Competencies of English Learners in K-3 Settings Through Playful Activities*, los autores Elke Schneider y Andrea Kulmhofer-Bommer tienen como objetivo (1) ayudar a los educadores a comprender mejor las diversas necesidades de aprendizaje social y académico de los niños que aprenden inglés (EL) en sus diferentes etapas de adquisición y aculturación del idioma, y (2) presenta actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral para el estudiante que aprende inglés alineadas con los estándares específicos de EL (TESOL International Association, 2006) y las adaptaciones identificadas (Ariza & Coady, 2018). Estas actividades de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral evidenciadas por la investigación y probadas en el campo son fáciles de integrar en los currículos. La información de apoyo del lenguaje oral del educador para cada actividad proporciona marcos para el diálogo oral para la práctica con los estudiantes.

En el tercer artículo, *¡Todos juegan!* Lin Moore y Elaine Zweig comparten estrategias para incluir a los niños con discapacidades en el juego. Por una variedad de razones, estos niños pueden carecer de las habilidades necesarias para participar adecuadamente en el juego con sus compañeros. Cuando los maestros son conscientes, pueden buscar oportunidades para ayudar a los niños con necesidades especiales a fortalecer estas habilidades. Modelar, andamiar y ofrecer sugerencias con palabras o materiales son solo algunas de las formas de promover el acceso para la plena inclusión.

En el cuarto artículo, *A Toolbox for Engaging Children in Play and Creativity for Learning Across The Domains*, Josh Thompson y Kristen Pearce proporcionan varias viñetas de niños en juego que permiten al lector visualizar el juego y la creatividad que tiene lugar. A medida que el niño se en el juego, no solo está involucrado en las experiencias, sino que también crea y moldea su sentido de sí mismo e identidad. Thompson y Pearce ofrecen un marco de referencia para el juego y la creatividad de los niños que apoya el aprendizaje en todas las áreas del desarrollo. Planificar y proporcionar las oportunidades para jugar es de gran importancia. La caja de herramientas proporcionada será muy beneficiosa para fomentar el juego en todos los entornos, incluidos el hogar o la escuela.

En *Milestones*, Dee Ray, director del Centro de Terapia de Juego de la Universidad del Norte de Texas, comparte ideas sobre el rol y los beneficios de la terapia del juego para los niños.

Como editoras invitadas, esperamos que encuentren este tema en un juego de interés a medida que determinan cómo su trabajo apoyará a los niños y familias del sur en este momento tan desafiante. Al ser un campeón del juego, estás ayudando a preservar el derecho de los niños a desarrollar habilidades y participar en oportunidades que los ayudarán a tener éxito en la escuela y en la vida. Cada uno de nosotros, como estamos seguros de que nuestros lectores también pueden hacerlo, podemos mirar hacia atrás en nuestra vida y recordar con cariño todos los momentos de participar en el juego. Ya sea desde nuestra juventud hasta la edad adulta, en el aula o fuera, el juego nos ha proporcionado la capacidad de experimentar el mundo que nos rodea y aprender de cada experiencia.

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# “What are We Going To Do?”

## Problem Solving in Sociodramatic Play

Patricia Becker

### Introduction

*There's nothing on the shelves.  
What are we going to do?  
We have to stock it.*

In this narrative from the author's research, 4-year-old Vincent (pseudonym) utilizes self-talk via think-aloud to problem solve during grocery store play. Vincent's self-talk illustrates how problems are inherent in children's everyday lives, and how problem solving skills “travel well” with them (Joseph & Strain, 2010, p. 28; Pawlina & Stanford, 2011). It demonstrates how sociodramatic play encourages children to actively solve problems, express feelings, and make decisions (Rajan, 2014).



Problem solving is a critical component of academic and social emotional learning. It is a life-long skill. For young children, opportunities to make choices and problem solve lay the foundation for later development of self-determination (Palmer et al., 2012). Fettig et al. (2016) note that children who are skilled problem solvers, display increased levels of independence and self-esteem. Problem solving decreases frustration, prevents challenging behavior, and helps children reconcile peer differences (Fettig et al., 2016; Gartrell, 2013). However, young children may not have the experience or ability to resolve problems independently. It is essential to provide them with opportunities to practice problem solving in meaningful and memorable ways (McLennan, 2012).

### Sociodramatic Play and Children's Problem Solving Development

One such opportunity is sociodramatic play. In this form of imaginary play, children co-create scenarios, enact roles, and use props. Sociodramatic play supports children's development of self-regulatory skills, which are fundamental to the development of problem solving (Whitebread et al., 2009). Children gain critical thinking skills by problem solving in environments created through drama and play; drama creates an imaginary world for exploring and negotiating multiple problems and solutions (Brown, 2017). Wasik and Jacobi-Vessels (2017) state that

drama “invites opportunities for children to problem solve” and “to use their imaginations and their creativity” (p. 770). Play, on the other hand, provides an authentic context for children to “examine, investigate, focus, and generalize” knowledge and skills like problem solving (Dennis & Stockall, 2014, p. 5). Gross (2015) suggests that play serves a significant role in promoting problem solving because children's investment in finding solutions is greater than during more teacher-directed tasks.

### Problem Solving Themes in Sociodramatic Play

Familiar themes in children's play can support and enhance their problem solving processes (Ramani & Brownell, 2014). Scenarios and themes embedded in children's play narratives allow them to “explore who they are and their place in the world” (Kimber, 2010, p. 1). Common threads in children's play narratives include opposing ideas, such as strong and weak e.g. “I'm in charge,” good and bad e.g. “Now you're a bad cat and I don't like you,” and brave and cowardly e.g. “I'm not scared 'cos I'm Spiderman!” (Kimber, 2010). These opposing ideas are recurring themes in children's books as well.

Children demonstrate understanding of opposing ideas, and in particular the concept of *opposite*, between the ages of four and five (Phillips & Pexman, 2015). **Table 1** displays opposite concepts displayed in 4-year-old children's play narratives and



behaviors. Teachers can model and reinforce use of opposites like empty and full during play, using self-talk. They can draw children’s attention to problems, solutions, causes, and effects with statements like, “The refrigerator was empty, but we went shopping, and now it is full” or “I filled my gas tank at the station, because it was empty” or “The dog’s water dish was empty, so I filled it.”



Howe et al. (2014) considers descriptive language, like opposite concepts, an indication of sophisticated, creative language use. They found that descriptive language was positively associated with set-up themes in play. It added richness to children’s narratives and expanded “the repertoire of possibilities inherent in a scenario” (Howe et al., 2014, p. 394). In addition to modeling opposite concepts, teachers can incorporate environmental print in play settings, to encourage use of descriptive language and generation of creative problem-solving themes. The environmental print may include doctor checklists, photos of empty/full gas gauges, open and closed signs, mechanic checklists, and lost and found posters. Teachers can foreshadow and build knowledge of descriptive language associated with these themes by reading books like *Don’t You Feel Well, Sam?* (Hest, 2007), *Mud Puddle* (Munsch, 2019), *Fix-It-Duck* (Alborough, 2007), and *Lost. Found.* (Arnold, 2015).

### Planning to Solve Problems in Sociodramatic Play

Planning plays an important role in problem solving. Epstein (2003) recommends that teachers make planning a part of the classroom day and provide children with a variety of materials that give them problem solving alternatives. For example, before engaging in gas station/mechanic play, teachers can encourage

children to share personal narratives like the 4-year-old’s below (Becker, 2015).

*My dad hadda [sic] take our van in the shop.  
‘Cause we had to fix our car.  
‘Cause, ‘cause the engine was broked.*

Teachers and children can brainstorm other problems they might encounter like a dirty car, a flat tire, or an empty gas tank. To plan for these potential problems, they can create and collect materials for washing the car, checking the air pressure, replacing and fixing the tire, and filling the gas tank. If conventional materials are not available, teachers can help children plan alternative solutions by saying, “We don’t have \_\_\_\_\_. What could we use instead?” (Epstein, 2003).

Before sociodramatic play, teachers can explicitly teach problem solving and scaffold the planning process. Visuals like Fox and Lentini’s “Problem solving Steps” poster and picture cards (<http://csefel.vanderbilt.edu/resources/strategies.html>) can support verbal instruction. The poster and picture cards include questions and prompts like, “What is my problem?” “Think of some solutions.” and “Give it a try!” Teachers can take photos of problem solving scenarios that might occur during play that represent steps in the problem solving process (Diamond & Hsiao, 2019). Fettig et al. (2015) suggests that teachers create a “What should I do?” game, in which children take turns pretending to

**Table 1 Opposite Concepts in Children’s Sociodramatic Play**

Concepts	Narrative	Behavior
sick/healthy	My poor doggy’s sick.	Went to the vet
closed/open	Sorry, it’s closed	Changed the sign
broken/fixd	My car/truck is broke.	Repaired the car
lost/found	She lost her mouse yesterday.	Made a poster
wrong/right	Well, take this back.	Returned the order

Source: P. Becker (2015).

be characters in books who encounter problems and generate solutions. Similarly, teachers can present children with pre-determined scenarios to role-play solutions to a given problem (McLennan, 2012).

Teachers can also promote planning and problem solving skills through children's games, puzzles, and block play. In block play, children apply engineering design principles when they "build, knock down, and rebuild" (Lindeman & Anderson, 2015, p. 38). Lindeman and Anderson (2015) suggest teachers encourage children to apply these principles and to be creative, and to use communication, critical thinking, and collaboration to problem solve. For example, after reading about the attributes of bridges, teachers can facilitate a discussion of what bridges can be made of and why they need to be strong. They can give children a variety of bridge building materials, including blocks, and ask them to identify problems and solutions they may encounter. After children draw, dictate, or write their observations, problems, and solutions, teachers can engage them in future planning, and discuss how they will apply what they learned about bridges today, to design and build their bridges tomorrow.

### Modeling and Scaffolding Problem Solving in Sociodramatic Play

Children may also need support using problem solving skills during play. During play, Epstein (2008) suggests that teachers identify problems children may not be aware of or encourage them to express what they perceive to be a problem. Verbally defining the problem can move children towards solving it (Gross, 2008). After identifying a problem, teachers can pose questions like "What do you think you can do about it?" or "What else can you do?" (Gross, 2008). They can encourage children to see if their ideas work and to consider alternatives when they do not (Epstein, 2008). Reminding children to problem solve and creating opportunities for practice can promote fluency in the skill (Fox & Lentini, 2006).

Teachers can apply Wasik and Jacobi-Vessels' (2017) strategies for supporting children's language, to modeling and scaffolding problem solving in play. These include (a) asking questions that invite extended responses, (b) providing meaningful feedback, and (c) introducing new vocabulary. Teachers can also think aloud about problems and allot time for children to do the same (Gross, 2015). For example, during veterinarian play, teachers can ask open-ended questions like, "How do you know your dog is sick?" introduce new vocabulary via a think aloud like, "I wonder if your dog has an infection. That could be the problem," or ask the child, "What do you think is the problem?" When thinking aloud, teachers can further model how to make connections to prior knowledge and real world problems and solutions, for example, "I remember when my dog had an infection. I had to give her medicine."

Gross (2015) identifies additional principles for teachers when modeling and scaffolding problem solving in early childhood classrooms. They include:

1. Use nonjudgmental words to define problems.
2. Ask children to think of solutions that satisfy multiple sides.
3. Allow children to say no to solutions that do not satisfy them.

Teacher's use of modeling and mindful language plays a critical role in how children learn to problem-solve (Kelley, 2018). In Kelley's (2018) narrative study, early childhood teachers frequently modeled how to solve their own problems using calm, positive, and strategic think aloud. They used mindful language to bring nonjudgmental awareness to a scenario, provide feedback, and position the child as the solver (p. 314). In addition to mindful language, teachers can scaffold problem solving more explicitly, by asking, suggesting, informing, and directing. **Table 2** provides examples of how the author modeled and scaffolded problem solving in play.

### Problem Solving Discourse in Sociodramatic Play

Children initiate and respond to problem solving discourse during play. They display rich language use that serves a range of functions or purposes. While Peterson et al. (2018) did not intentionally analyze children's play transcripts for problem solving discourse, their categories and sample utterances provide examples of it. Children used language (a) for their own needs, "Can you get me a wheel please?" (b) for learning, "I need two lists because I'm making a big list," (c) for getting along, "Want me to help you?" (d) for expressing disagreement, "Wanna switch? They're both the same," and (e) for directing, "Find an axe." The children's word choices suggest they were identifying,

**Table 2 Teacher Models and Scaffolds of Problem Solving in Sociodramatic Play**

Theme	Model or Scaffold	Props
Veterinarian	Do you think he needs a bandage or a shot?	Stuffed animals, Doctor's kit, Checklist, Medical supplies
Grocery Store	I found a pencil. I needed one so I could make my shopping list.	Grocery store ads, Coupons, Shopping list, Pencil
Gas Station/ Mechanic	Oh, those windows are really dirty. We need to wash the windows.	Car, Spray bottle, Squeegee, Towel
Construction	We have to start framing our house. We can pretend the blocks are our lumber.	House building books or photos, House plans, Blocks
Restaurant	Sometimes you have to wear gloves when you're making your sandwich. Then you don't get germs on the sandwich.	Sandwich supplies, Non-latex gloves

Source: P. Becker (2015).



negotiating, or addressing a problem. In fact, one of Peterson et al.'s codes was planning what to do, or talking through a problem, "I'm gonna build something with these" (p. 27).

During play, children may also use language to reference cognitive and emotional states using words like know and sad (Howe et al., 2014). This internal state language may be an indicator of their social understanding and ability to co-construct play narratives (Howe et al., 2014). The author found evidence of internal state language, for example, "That's a sad dog. My dog is sad," as well as problem solving language used to pretend, suggest, inform, relate, think aloud, ask, express wants and needs, and direct in 4-year-old children's play discourse. As children negotiated and created play scenarios, references to problems and solutions were natural by-products (Becker, 2015). **Table 3** provides examples of children's problem solving discourse and discourse functions in play.

**Table 3 Children's Problem Solving Discourse and Discourse Functions in Sociodramatic Play**

Theme	Discourse	Function
Veterinarian	Pretend your dog runned away without the leash on.	Pretend Suggest
	Here, he's sick. He needs some medicine.	Inform Direct
	What's wrong with your dog?	Ask
Grocery Store	Okay, I don't have any money. I need a credit card.	Think aloud Express wants and needs
	It (the bag) tore. It ripped. I'm gonna get plastic.	Relate Think aloud
	Someone should stock the shelf.	Suggest
Gas Station/ Mechanic	Put some gas in.	Direct
	What is your problem today?	Ask
	I have to pump it. He has a flat tire.	Think aloud Inform
Construction	It will help you. These (home building brochure) are 'structions.	Inform
	There's a little more counters coming back (on back order). There's counters just not here right now.	Inform
Restaurant	This (apron) make you sure you not get all messy.	Inform
	We left our cheese out. And it spoiled. So we need new ones right now.	Relate Direct

Source: Examples from P. Becker (2015)

## Problem Solving Retellings in Sociodramatic Play

Sociodramatic play and narrative text are structurally similar. They both include story grammar elements like characters, settings, problems, and solutions that children can incorporate in retellings. Teaching children about story grammar elements, and how stories are structured, will help them comprehend narrative text (Dymock, 2007). The author found that play provides a motivating context for children to tell and retell stories that include these elements. Teachers can facilitate and assess children's narrative comprehension and production by eliciting, recording, transcribing, and providing feedback on children's play retellings.

Play retellings require as little as one-minute to record. They yield authentic data useful for progress monitoring, and provide evidence of how children understand problems and solutions (Becker, 2015). To elicit individual or co-constructed play retellings, teachers can prompt children with, "Tell me a story about your play" or "Tell me a story about playing \_\_\_\_ today." They

can scaffold children's play retellings by providing visual or verbal supports that include icons, questions, cloze, and/or multiple choice that remind children to incorporate characters, settings, problems, solutions, and emotions in their stories.

Two examples of 4-year-olds' restaurant play retellings from the author's research are below. Prior to play, the teacher and children brainstormed potential problems and shared personal narratives in which spilling and breaking themes were prevalent. These themes and the wrong order scenario teachers roleplayed, were frequently reflected in their play and play retellings, over the next two weeks.

Teacher: *Tell me a story about your play today.*  
 Child: *Uh, I was the server. And then I make a sandwich at the restaurant. And then (peer's name) spilled her, her apple juice. And then she was crying. And then I hel...and then I cleaned it up. And then she...and then it solved the problem. And then, and then it was all gone. And then she was happy.*

Teacher: *Tell me a story about your play today.*  
 Child: *I was a customer. And I was waiting for my food. And I wanted pepper and the oni.*  
 Teacher: *You wanted pepperoni?*  
 Child: *And they did it all wrong.*  
 Teacher: *The did it all wrong?*  
 Child: *Yeah. (Laughs). They forgot it. And then they fix it all up.*  
 Teacher: *Whew!*  
 Child: *And then that was the end.*

## Conclusion

The ability to problem solve is critical to academic and social emotional learning. Problems and solutions are inherent to children's sociodramatic play themes and play discourse. This makes play an authentic medium for teachers to promote problem solving in the early childhood classroom. Teachers can facilitate the problem solving process by engaging children in planning activities and instruction, and by providing problem solving models and scaffolds during play. They can observe and analyze children's problem solving discourse during play, and elicit retellings after play.

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# Everyone Plays!

## Recapturing Play for Children with Special Needs

Lin Moore and Elaine Zweig

*A child with a special need moves quickly toward children who are playing a game at a table in the classroom. He shoves one of the children out of the way and disturbs the pieces of the game on the table. Does this sound familiar? Children with learning and thinking differences sometimes lack impulse control and have difficulty filtering their words or actions. They may not pay attention or be unknowingly insulting. It is possible that the child does not realize when he is being too forceful.*

Children with special needs may have less access to play due to the nature of their developmental delay or disability or their lack of experience with typically developing peers. Many preschools and kindergartens have reduced play in their daily schedules and elementary schools have reduced or eliminated recess (Jarrett et al., 2015; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006). The current focus on state standards, push-down curricula, academic rigor, and accountability further leaves teachers wondering how to do it all (Mraz et al., 2016; Riley-Ayers & Figueras-Daniel, 2019). Consequently, we are facing a disappearance of play (Bodrova & Leong, 2003; Rentzou et al., 2019). As early childhood educators, we are responsible to ensure that all children have access to play opportunities and can fully participate in child-directed free play and play-based curriculum experiences. Children with special needs may require additional supports for access and full participation (Division for Early Childhood, 2014, 2016).

Play is a dynamic process with multiple definitions that emphasize active engagement in activities that are often spontaneous, intrinsically motivated, and pleasurable or fun (Allee-Herndon, 2019; Paes & Eberhart, 2019; Zosh et al., 2018). Experts agree that play contributes to the growth and development of children in cognitive, social and emotional, physical, and communication domains (Frost et al., 2012; Hassinger-Das et al., 2019; Singer, 2006; Sluss, 2019; Zigler & Bishop-Josef, 2006;). Where do we begin to effectively support play for children with special needs?

### Inclusion of All Children

Creating an inclusive classroom climate by welcoming all children regardless of their abilities enhances a community of learners (Gronlund & Rendon, 2017). Children practice making friends, helping one another, and respecting individual differences. Teachers learn about each child and their family members to identify strengths, attention and activity levels, play preferences, and special interests (Division for Early Childhood, 2016). Teachers are mindful that children represent diverse cultures and have a range of prior experiences, which may possibly include chronic stress and trauma. In addition, many children are dual-language learners. Consequently, teachers must draw upon cultural competence by valuing diversity, supporting home languages, and



managing children's challenging behaviors (Gronlund & Rendon, 2017; National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2019). Often, this will require intentional planning and targeted interventions by teachers.

### The Role of the Teacher in Child-directed Play

Child-directed play may be referred to as free play or discovery play. Children use creativity, pretense, and symbolic representation to make sense of their world (Moore & Zweig, 2021; Sluss, 2019). Child-directed play provides opportunities for children to initiate exploration, to manipulate play props and re-arrange loose parts, and to practice persistence. The teacher's role is an active one by addressing the needs of each child. Preparing the environment, arranging the space, selecting appropriate learning materials, and providing ample time in the daily schedule takes intentional planning. It is important to provide open-ended, appealing materials

in adequate quantities to offer choices to children. Next, the teacher observes children's engagement in play by staying nearby, watching, listening, and interacting to support inclusion. The wise teacher knows when to intervene on behalf of a child with special needs. The following are some examples.

- A child who wanders, unable to decide on a play activity.
- A child who appears confused or frustrated.
- A child who is unable to enter a play group because they lack the language or social skills to interact and communicate with others.
- A child who is struggling to interact effectively with peers due to lack of vocabulary, lack of self-regulation to manage strong emotions, or limited experiences to participate in imaginary situations.

How to intervene will be determined by the needs of the child and the specific situation. A teacher might play alongside a child who is indecisive. Modeling how to use play materials will assist a child who is confused or frustrated by intervening before the child resorts to withdrawal or aggression. Scaffolding can also be provided by selecting a more competent peer as a play partner for a reluctant or disengaged child. Offering suggestions with words or materials can assist a child who struggles with a limited vocabulary or strong emotions. Provocations and challenges may be necessary for the child who has little experience with pretending. Familiar items from the child's home and culture will invite more imaginative play. Finally, children can benefit from reflecting about their play by recalling play activities with stories, re-enactments, drawings, and captioned photographs (Jones & Reynolds, 2011).

Child-directed or free play in a classroom or on the playground allows children to determine when, with whom, and where to play (Frost et al., 2012). However, children with disabilities are more likely to be socially neglected. They may be impulsive, argumentative, or overly aggressive, resulting in rejection by their peers. Lack of social skills may interfere with the development of friendships that are critically important to children's development (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2020). Teacher intervention is often necessary to promote successful peer-to-peer interactions. The teacher serves as a mediator to keep children emotionally and physically safe. Clarifying or interpreting the words and intentions of a child with special needs can pave the way for more positive interactions. A child might need assistance to join a play partner or to enter group



play. As a co-player, the teacher can model prosocial behaviors such as taking turns and cooperating with others. Through social play, children learn to express emotions, recognize the perspectives of others, and demonstrate empathy. As children gain social competence and a sense of belonging, the need for interventions will be gradually reduced (Moore & Zweig, 2021).

### The Role of the Teacher in Guided Play

Guided play involves activities that are structured by adults and focused on learning goals derived from early childhood education standards or developmental milestones. Guided play in which children are actively engaged is considered play-based learning (Gronlund & Rendon, 2017; Masterson & Bohart, 2019; Moore & Zweig, 2021). Teachers provide guidance by introducing new concepts, asking questions, modeling vocabulary, extending the learning, and providing prompts for problem solving (Hassingier-Das et al., 2019; McDonald, 2019; Paes & Eberhart, 2019).

It takes intentional planning to design developmentally and culturally appropriate themes of study with connections to early learning standards. Promoting access and full inclusion of children with special needs requires knowing each child individually and preparing adjustments, adaptations, and/or accommodations. Guided play can support the curiosity, initiative, persistence, attention and engagement, problem solving, and creative thinking of young learners through provocations and challenges (Masterson & Bohart, 2019; Mraz et al., 2016). Using observations and assessments, teachers can address the ongoing needs of each child.

Guided play can be incorporated into every aspect of the early childhood curriculum. Children can be exposed to rich content through playful approaches in language and literacy, mathe-

matics, science, social studies, the arts, and motor development (Gronlund & Rendon, 2017; Masterson & Bohart, 2019; Mraz et al., 2016; Parks, 2015) Opportunities for play-based learning can extend from the classroom to the outdoors.

Teachers may need to adjust the classroom arrangement to allow easy access for children with walkers or wheelchairs. A quiet place where a child can self-isolate provides a welcome respite for a child who becomes overwhelmed by the noise and clutter of a shared space. Concerns about both physical and emotional safety of all children should take priority. Teaching a problem-solving approach to conflict resolution will enable children with different abilities to learn empathy, appropriate expressions for emotions, self-regulation, and skills of collaboration.

A knowledgeable teacher will be ready with adaptations of learning activities for children with varied practical and academic skills. Center times or workshops can be lengthened when children are focused and deeply engaged in projects. Circle times or whole group activities can be curtailed when children's interests wane and wiggle breaks are needed. Adaptations to promote full participation may include pairing a child with a more competent peer, a buddy system to manage routines, and more frequent individual or small group sessions. A flexible teacher can assess learning by encouraging multiple ways for children to demonstrate what they learned. Progress of each child can be monitored by documenting play activities with words and pictures, preparing anecdotal records, using checklists, and collecting work samples.

Accommodations will be determined by legal mandates to provide the least restrictive environment for each child with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). Assistive technology that promotes access to toys and materials, improves mobility, or supports a child's communications will ensure access and full participation by children with special needs (Kirk et al., 2015). Ideally, playgrounds should meet guidelines for accessible play areas that have been tested for stability and safety (United States Access Board, 2007).

A successful strategy for implementing guided play involves the Plan-Do-Review Process, originally prescribed by the High/Scope curriculum for preschoolers (Weikart, 2004). The teacher organizes the play environment, provides props and play materials, schedules time, sets ground rules, and observes and interacts with individuals or groups of children to extend the play. Children are partners in learning and active participants in each stage of the process. The Plan-Do-Review Process provides a framework for guiding the play of children with and without special needs.

In the *Planning* stage, the teacher briefly introduces new options or reminds children of the choices of activities that are available. In the classroom, these might include puzzles and manipulatives, a small group science experiment, creative arts activities, music and movement with scarves, and dramatic play. In the outdoors, choices might include circle games, climbing equipment, chalk drawing, and play with balls. Each child states their intention to participate and moves to the specified area. The teacher records children's verbal responses or a system for children to record their own choices with a planning board or computer may be instituted. Children with limited language skills may point to an area of the room or playground, or otherwise indicate their intentions nonverbally. As children become accustomed to planning, they will develop more detailed plans about how they will use materials and what goals they intend to accomplish.

During the *Doing* stage, children are actively engaged with materials and may interact freely with co-players. The Teacher allots enough time for children to follow through on their plans. In addition, the teacher carefully observes the children and converses with them about their activities, offering ideas for extensions and facilitating problem solving, as needed. Children with short attention spans or who may be easily distracted might need support from the teacher to follow or change their plans.

During the *Reviewing* stage, a guided discussion encourages each child to reflect on what was accomplished or discovered. Children often focus on what worked and what they might change in the future. The reflective process promotes thinking about the play, using language to describe what was done, evaluating the outcomes, and anticipating plans for another day. The teacher respectfully asks questions to gain the child's perspectives, not to quiz the child on curriculum content. Children's efforts are acknowledged and celebrated by all.

## Recapturing Play through Advocacy

We can recapture play by advocating for the rights to play experiences for all children. There are several professional organizations that recognize and promote the importance of play in chil-

**Table 1 Examples of Agencies and Foundations that Promote Play**

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alliance for Childhood, <a href="https://allianceforchildhood.org">https://allianceforchildhood.org</a></li> <li>• Childhood Education International, <a href="https://ceinternational1892.org/">https://ceinternational1892.org/</a></li> <li>• Council for Exceptional Children, <a href="https://exceptionalchildren.org/">https://exceptionalchildren.org/</a></li> <li>• Division for Early Childhood of the Council for Exceptional Children, <a href="https://www.dec-spec.org">https://www.dec-spec.org</a></li> <li>• Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center, <a href="https://ectacenter.org/">https://ectacenter.org/</a></li> <li>• Federation for Children with Special Needs, <a href="https://fcsn.org/">https://fcsn.org/</a></li> <li>• International Play Association-USA, <a href="https://ipausa.org/">https://ipausa.org/</a></li> <li>• National Association for the Education of Young Children, <a href="https://naeyc.org">https://naeyc.org</a></li> <li>• National Inclusion Project, <a href="https://www.inclusionproject/lets-all-play">https://www.inclusionproject/lets-all-play</a></li> <li>• Office of Special Education Programs, <a href="https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html">https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osep/index.html</a></li> <li>• Southern Early Childhood Association, <a href="https://www.seca.info/">https://www.seca.info/</a></li> </ul>
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dren's development. Resources are also available from various agencies and foundations. **Table 1** includes some examples of organizations that advocate for play for all children.

We hope that these suggestions will serve as inspiration for your work with young children. Let's join together to ensure that children with special needs can experience the joys and benefits of play!

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ucation with students in the Early Childhood Educator Program. She teaches undergraduates in observation and assessment, theories of development, early childhood curriculum, education practices, child development associate training, special education, abuse and neglect, and leadership, Dr Zweig's expertise is in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Elementary Education, Special Education, Training Teachers, Parenting, Parent Involvement, Children with Special Needs and Families, Guidance, Child Abuse, Supervision and Administration, Educational Leadership. She has presented over 50 workshops at local, state and national training conferences to showcase early childhood trends and teacher education. She has authored and co-authored four textbooks and has reviewed 25 books, articles and technical reports. Dr. Zweig serves on a number of Executive Boards. Among them are the Texas Workforce Commission, University and College Advisory Boards, and Region 10 Early Head Start and Head Start Advisory Boards. Additional awards include Teacher of the Year, Professor of the Year, Outstanding Trainer of the Year, Texas Teacher Educator of the Year, Early Childhood Visionary of the Year, and Who's Who Among America's Teachers. Dr. Zweig is a strong supporter of the power of positive thinking in the workplace. She believes that children develop a sense of self and learn to make sense of the world around them through play.

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# Let's Play: Building Oral Competencies of English Learners in K-3 Settings Through Playful Activities

Elke Schneider and Andrea Kulmhofer-Bommer

## Introduction

There are several reasons for focusing on nonnative speakers of English, or English learners (ELs) and their oral language development in K-grade 3 settings. For one, ELs represent the fastest growing student population in the U.S. with an over 50 percent increase since 2010 in almost every state, especially in the southern region of the U.S. (U.S. Department of Education, 2017a). Moreover, it is a daunting task for ELs to become fluent users of English who understand the socio-cultural and linguistic characteristics of this complex language (Ariza & Coady, 2018). Compared to their native speaker peers, first generation ELs or newcomers who often have experienced migration traumas (Dutro, 2019; Guirguis & Longley, 2020), have not had a chance to acquire the foundations of English prior to entering preschool or kindergarten (Fielding, et al., 2017). They have a huge language and acculturation gap to fill (for more details on ways to integrate newcomers, see U.S. Department of Education, 2017b). Second-generation ELs whose parents immigrated to the U.S., are also constantly challenged to process differences and similarities between English and their home languages and traditions (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Yehuda & Lehrner, 2018). Therefore, early childhood educators need to be aware of ELs' diverse language and acculturation needs to support them effectively.

However, early childhood educators (heretofore referred to as educators) often lack proper training to meet ELs learning needs (Villegas, et al., 2018). Therefore, this article (1) assists educators in better understanding the diverse social and academic learning needs of ELs in their varying language acquisition and acculturation stages, and (2) introduces EL-specific, playful oral language learning activities that are student-centered and align with EL-specific standards (TESOL International Association, 2006) and identified accommodations (Ariza & Coady, 2018).



## Foundations of Oral Language Learning for ELs

Well-developed oral language skills, in this article referred to as competencies, are the foundation for successful academic reading, writing, and spelling skills (Stagnitti, et al., 2016; Jennings & Haynes, 2018). Oral language competencies include both effective listening and speaking skills as both are necessary to communicate competently (Ariza & Coady, 2018). Consequently, developing oral language competencies for social and academic scenarios in K-grade 3 settings requires an explicit focus on proper social and academic *speaking skills* and *listening comprehension skills* (Jennings & Haynes, 2018; Zwiers & Hamerla, 2017). To acquire these competencies, ELs' along with all other students, must have an awareness of how to pronounce and use words, phrases, and sentences in grammatically and socially appropriate ways. Additionally, ELs must understand and use nonverbal communication features (i.e., gestures, postures, facial expressions) and language features such as tone of voice or pausing in culturally appropriate ways to achieve communication goals (Foorman, 2015; Khalifa & Fallal, 2017). These features make up about 80 percent of oral communication and





home culture with the goal of knowing when and how to apply the norms of each culture (Schwartz & Unger, 2017).

As ELs acculturate and acquire the new language, they go through various phases at an individual pace that depends on their personal history and life circumstances. ELs' success in language acquisition and acculturation are intertwined. Educators play an important role in helping ELs succeed in both domains. For instance, newcomers are in a silent phase for several weeks in which educators need to use gestures, images, and clear, repetitive language support to help them progress from single word to full-sentence responses. This is possible in a safe environment that allows ELs to take risks expressing themselves. Therefore, the better-informed educators are about ELs' story and home life, the more effective their support. In this process, ELs go through culture shock because of overwhelm when they realize the complexity of language and acculturation demands put on them all day long. Signs of withdrawal and fatigue may give the impression of an unmotivated, disinterested learner. However, this is a natural phase all ELs go through regardless of language skills. Educators must respond with special attention, care, and understanding so ELs progress smoothly into active engagement with the new language and culture (Ariza & Coady, 2018).

### Principles of Playful Oral Language Learning and Instruction

Cohen (2018) summarizes decades of research that highlight the importance of playful learning experiences in early childhood education. An essential component of such playful experiences is the fostering of oral language competencies among native and nonnative speakers (August & Shanahan, 2006; Zwiers & Hamerla, 2017). Among important benefits of playful learning are (1) providing developmentally appropriate learning experiences that foster creative problem solving in joyful scenarios (Mraz et al., 2019), (2) fostering cognitive development in preparation for more advanced academic tasks such as reading and writing (McLeod, et al., 2017), (3) helping children process adverse experiences in home environments (Haas & Ray, 2020) including traumatic experiences that many ELs may have endured (Guirguis & Longley, 2020); (4) mediating behavior issues (Gerard Kaduson, et al., 2019), and (5) strengthening a variety of literacy skills, including oral language skills (Stagnitti, et al., 2016).

In the context of this article, "play" refers to playful language learning experiences that engage learners creatively by activating their imagination so they can develop competencies that help them respond to diverse life situations effectively. The authors expand "play" beyond spontaneous play and include different forms of games to foster oral language skills based on a) a selection of age-and skill appropriate activities with clear achievable goals, b) careful organization of playful activities that awaken sensory and cognitive curiosity, and ensure creative engagement, and c) proper preparation of all participants for the activity to be a joyful, enriching experience. This includes providing vocabulary and necessary language structures or sentence frames prior to or during a playful activity (see guidelines in next section) (Allsop & Yessel, 2015). Traditionally in early education years, games help

complement often fragmentary oral language (Hull, 2016). For instance, if ELs do not have the language competence to answer a question properly, they can supplement their utterance with gestures or facial expressions to be understood.

ELs struggle with the acquisition of oral language competencies for various reasons. For one, dialectal language variations can complicate the development of academic oral competencies needed for school. Furthermore, it takes ELs about two to three years to acquire native-speaker-like *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS) used outside the classroom and in interpersonal, social connections. To acquire native speaker-like *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP) necessary to engage in academic oral and written dialog about content-specific information (i.e., science, social studies) takes between seven to nine years (Cummins, 1980). Each person progresses at an individual pace depending on migration story and social-emotional support in school and at home. ELs with no or very limited formal schooling in their first language need even more time to achieve native-level speaking skills for BICS and CALP (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Cummins, 2015). Thus it is not uncommon for ELs to communicate comfortably during recess with peers or adults but to fall silent in instructional settings because applying CALP is so much more complex and demanding than applying BICS. Consequently, educators need to be aware that ELs' participation in playful oral language activities depends on their stage of *language acquisition and acculturation*.

During the process of *language acquisition*, ELs go through trial and error phases as they gradually get closer to native speaker language competence. ELs do so by listening to native speakers, practicing to express themselves in English, and incorporating corrective feedback from their surroundings. This process offers opportunity to learn from mistakes especially when educators provide positive corrective responses such as rephrasing what children said in correct English (Selinker, 2013). The term *acculturation* refers to an ongoing process of ELs learning about unfamiliar cultural norms while continuing to engage in the original

**Table 1: Guidelines for Planning, Supporting and Analyzing Oral Performances**

<p><b>Planning playful activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify the standards and curriculum goals and resulting specific lesson objectives for a playful, learner-centered activity.</li><li>• Consult with the ESOL teacher about specific language goals set for EL (WIDA, 2021).</li><li>• Decide on playful oral competency enhancing activity and manipulatives. (i.e., toys/tools for games, items/word lists for guessing games).</li><li>• Select vocabulary and dialog structures that meet ELs' language acquisition and acculturation needs.</li><li>• Carefully plan pairing up ELs with native speakers to ensure natural language use and connections between ELs and native speakers.</li><li>• Prepare activity rules that guarantee ELs get a chance to participate according to their language skill levels and prepare game rules with visuals so ELs can process what they hear/read more easily (Ariza &amp; Coady, 2018).</li><li>• Design a progress monitoring chart (see example in Figure 1) that contains oral skills and language structures</li></ul> <p><b>Preparing students for playful activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pre-teach necessary language for games using images and gestures for newcomers and provide repeated oral practice prior to starting the selected game</li><li>• Pair up ELs with native speakers and model prior to a playful activity how team members can support ELs in the game. (Ariza &amp; Coady, 2018)</li><li>• Explicitly model activity rules for students with gestures, images, (and text prompts as needed)</li></ul> <p><b>Supporting playful language activities during play/game time</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Do not force ELs to speak when they are not ready. Instead, allow them to participate nonverbally if needed (Ariza &amp; Coady, 2018).</li><li>• Listen in on POLLAs that occur in pairs or small groups and provide language support. As needed, use gestures or images to address vocabulary needs.</li><li>• Rephrase a fragmented response in the proper structure and, where appropriate, have EL repeat it so the EL can hear and use the correct language structure without stalling the dialog exchange in a playful activity.</li><li>• Use translation devices and allow ELs to use them (i.e., picture dictionary, dictionary, a tablet, smart phone) when gestures are not helping.</li><li>• Prior to using verbal and nonverbal praise (i.e., gestures), ensure ELs understand culture-specific components of praises (Ariza &amp; Coady, 2018).</li><li>• Model for peers how to provide language support and give an EL proper time to participate in playful dialog (when age-appropriate).</li><li>• Provide sentence frames in writing on small silent dialog cards for ELs who can read and have them use these cards during a game (see Zwiers, 2019) and use icons or images for non-readers to learn about oral language structures to use</li><li>• Use the designed progress monitoring chart to document learner progress (see example in Figure 1)</li><li>• Respond to arising needs by modeling tasks again, providing vocabulary support, answering questions, prompting students, or rephrasing.</li></ul> <p><b>Follow-up after playful activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Analyze progress monitoring data and other anecdotal notes to decide on future oral practice focus points and playful activities.</li><li>• Design follow-up oral learning activities that reinforces or expand on previous oral language practice (i.e., ELs write or draw a response to visual, written or oral prompts).</li></ul>
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students develop social and academic language skills (Cohen, 2018). Foreign and second language instruction also implements games to foster communication skills (Ariza & Coady, 2018).

### Guidelines for Planning, Supporting, and Analyzing Oral Performance

Before sharing playful oral language learning activities (POLLAs), the following general guidelines (Table 1) help educators plan, implement, monitor, and deepen playful oral language learning experiences for ELs.

When considering these guidelines, it is crucial to select and pre-teach essential social and academic language structures so ELs' can adopt them as active vocabulary through joyful game participation. In addition to the language needed to engage in the game, ELs also need explicit support to express their comprehension needs (i.e., *What do you mean by...? Please say this again. I did not understand., What does... mean?*). Moreover, newcomers without sufficient language skills, depend on image and gesture clues to get an idea of how English sentences or questions are formed. For instance, a stick figure can stand for the acting force in a sentence/question (subject, person place, or

thing). A zig-zag line with an arrow pointing to the right can illustrate the verb action. The image of a tree can illustrate where place information appears, and a clock can illustrate where time information needs to occur in a sentence. Furthermore, when implementing POLLAs, it is essential to initiate authentic dialog between ELs and their native speaking peers. For newcomers, it is helpful to pair them up with another EL with better language skills for spontaneous language support during POLLAs (Ariza & Coady, 2018).

## Oral Language Competencies Fostered through Play

Oral language skills must be taught explicitly as research has shown for decades (August & Shanahan, 2006; Stockard, et al., 2018). In most U.S. states, national, annual oral English language proficiency assessments for ELs in grades K-12, developed by the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) Consortium pressure educators to provide explicit oral language instruction to ELs who struggle with these assessments without enough explicit practice. ELs engage in ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) Testing which is part of the WIDA MODEL (Measure of Developing English Language) (WIDA, 2021).

The following research-evidenced, student-centered POLLAs highlight how to infuse explicit language instruction for ELs to foster communicative competences (Maqfirah & Chairina, 2018). The selected POLLAs consist of guessing and matching games that foster critical thinking and problem-solving skills (Allsop & Yessel, 2015; Cohen, 2018). To assist educators in identifying specific language structures to support ELs in these games, each activity consists of a) an activity description, and b) educators oral language support reminders that include explicit examples of common language structures for an activity. Types of game-specific language support structures can be different sentence or question frames that include structures to describe, compare, predict or express an opinion or a reason. These can be pre-taught or provided during POLLAs. Some activities only require one-word or phrase responses with proper pronunciation, intonation and fluency. Others push students to use complete sentences and different types of questions. This provides educators with scaffolding options in response to ELs' oral language support needs. While many games are commercially available, educators benefit from self-designed games tailored to learner needs and curriculum content. Grade-level team members can work on them together to expand a repertoire efficiently over time. The following games provide ideas for such games with special language focus. The authors and their students have used these successfully for decades.

### Game 1: Picture Guessing

#### Activity description

Students work in small groups. One person pulls a picture out of an envelope and must answer questions about the picture from the rest of the group who guesses what the picture displays. Question cards give players an idea what kinds of questions to ask. Cards include prompts like "number", "when", "where",

"temperature", "color," or "size." Guessers create mental images based on received responses and tell their team members what picture they see in their heads by saying "What I hear makes me picture...." When guessers have identified the picture, roles can shift, and students continue with a new picture.

### Educators Oral Language Support

Educators select images from magazines or teaching resources that display a single simple action with few characters. Content on the images must meet students' background knowledge. Educators rotate between groups and provide language support, point to question cards, and take notes on language challenges (see progress monitoring chart in **Figure 1**). Educators provide visual or written sentence frames on small cards or portable white boards for ELs to use as needed. These 'silent coaching cards' can have color-coding and/or images for certain components like question words, verbs, actor, time or place information. (For other ideas on academic language support, see Zwiers 2019, Zwiers & Hamerla, 2017).

Students need to know sentence structures for questions such as Where is..., Is... inside or outside?, How many.... are there? When/what time of day/night does.... happen? Is.... bigger/smaller than...? Players also need to be able to comprehend and form answers to such questions using structures like .... Is bigger than..., ... is as big as..., There is/are/ The action is + [place information], .... happens +[time information]. Moreover, listeners practice comprehending what peers share in image descriptions starting with What you say makes me picture.... They practice expressing agreement or disagreement using structures such as I disagree with this because..... Research shows that these practices improve ELs' and native speakers' academic speaking and comprehension skills significantly (Atoum & Resiq, 2018; Christodoulou, et al., 2017).

### Game 2: Charades

#### Activity description

Students work in teams to guess what a member of another team acts out. The guessing team members shout out what they think the gesture stands for. The winner is the team that guesses the acted out word or phrase first. The educator shares words or expressions to guess in writing, in form of realistic pictures, or whispers them into the actor's ear.

### Educators Oral Language Support

Educators select guessing material that students can act out. The following language components lend themselves well for this activity: Verbs and verb phrases (i.e., listen, read, eat look for vs. look at vs. look up to...), adjectives (i.e., sad, grouchy, strong), nouns such as professions or tools (i.e., painter, broom) or idioms, especially those frequently used by educators and students (i.e., keep your eyes to yourself, give me a hand). When making team decisions on what a gesture stands for, students need language structures such as I think this is/means.... because...; This looks like someone is \_\_\_ (action +ing)/ a \_\_\_\_ (noun)/ \_\_\_\_ (adjective). Students acting out words and expressions must be able to comprehend their peers' suggestions and adjust their gestures based on what they hear.



**Figure 1: Progress Monitoring Chart: Oral Competencies**

Date:				
Task Description:				
Learning Objective:				
Selected Oral Language Skills	Student 1	Student 2	Student ...	Comments
<b>Listening Comprehension</b>				
Keeps proper eye contact				
Signals attention to speaker (non/verbally)				
<b>Speaking</b>				
Uses appropriate nonverbal communication signs of approval, disapproval, (not) understanding				
Asks questions for comprehension				
Answers questions comprehensibly (gestures, words, phrases)				
Answers with yes/no				
Answers comprehensibly in complete sentence/s (with or without error)				
Coding Key (example):				
✓✓ no improvement needed, independently done				
✓ some improvement needed, done correctly after prompt				
-- significant improvement needed, incorrect response after prompt				

### Game 3: Pictionary

#### Activity description

For Pictionary, the same game routines apply as described for Charades. The only difference is that students draw representations of a word or expression instead of acting them out.

#### Educators Oral Language Support

Educators provide pre-taught words or phrases and that players can draw. Players need to have fine motor skills to put basic drawings on paper or on white boards. They also need to be capable of comprehending peer responses and of answering questions. For guessing and listening, students need to be able to use the same sentence structures as indicated for Charades.

### Game 4: Hot Seat

#### Activity description

Each student must guess the word/phrase or image on ones back. To find the correct answer, each person asks questions and listens to responses from those who can see the hidden information. Based on formed visual imagery, the guesser makes statements What you say makes me picture... and asks more targeted questions. Either students are paired up or work in small groups or they walk around the room asking any class member or educator for information pinned to their backs. In a variation of this game, the guesser sits with his/her back to a

board or flip chart that displays the word or phrase to guess. The rest of the group/class can see the word or phrase and assists the guesser with answers. Once a key word/term is identified another student takes on the guesser role.

#### Educators Oral Language Support

Educators clarify the topic area for each guessing round (i.e., mammals or famous people we just learned about). Guessers need to be familiar with a variety of question and hypothesis-making structures such as asking for/hypothesizing about age, size, and other characteristics. Guessers and listeners need to be able to understand each other. These are all structures similar to those listed under the game description for "Picture guessing."

### Game 5: Touch-Detective

#### Activity description

For this Montessori-based activity (Montessori, et al., 2017), players work in pairs. One player has eyes blind-folded with a scarf or blindfold with ruffles at the bottom to avoid see through attempts (for examples, see <https://www.montessoriservices.com/blindfold>) and guesses what a peer places in his/her hands or what s/he feels. The blind-folded student describes what the item in hand feels like and ultimately hypothesizes what the item is. Items can be things or large letters cut out of sand paper

or other touch-sensitive materials. Students sensitive to being blind-folded, reach with their hands through holes in a large bag or a closed-up shoebox.

### **Educators Oral Language Support**

Educators need to select items that are safe (no sharp edges or end points) and with which students are familiar. Blind-folded students need sentence frames such as “This feels like... it has something like a.... It makes me think it is ....”, “Can I (or someone else) use this to...? or What can I do with this? The seeing team partner provides responses using structures like You are on the right track/wrong track with this thought. For a guiding prompt, the peer can use structures such as What you hold in your hands you can use for + [action], Think of ...

### **Game 6: Word-Picture, Phrase-Picture or Idiom-Picture Matching**

#### **Activity description**

For this match-and-talk activity, students need to be able to read words, phrases or idioms written on language cards and be familiar with the images that represent the meaning of these language cards. The first task is to match the meaning of a language card with a picture card (memory game model) placed face-up in front of them. At the word level, three different matching tasks are possible: (1) single word-picture matches, (2) matching two words that compose a compound word with a picture (i.e., shoe and lace, head and band), and (3) matching a prefix and a root word card (i.e., un and happy, re and read)

with a picture. Research shows that early focus on prefix-root-words is beneficial for native and nonnative speakers (Manyak & Manyak, 2018; Raudszus et al., 2021). At the phrase level, language cards show two or more words that do not compose a full sentence (Matthews, 2014) such as washing my hands or two children in a bathtub and students match those with a picture. Such practice at the phrase level is important because it provides a transition to comprehending sentences (Ariza & Coady, 2018). At the sentence level, students match idioms such as Give me a hand! or Keep your eyes to yourself with a picture. These are figurative expressions that mean something different than their literal meaning (Matthews, 2014) and are a challenging language feature for ELs.

Next, once students have found matches, students talk about their matched words and pictures. Educators prompt students to a) say single words and expressions or b) describe what they see on their cards or c) share associations. Students can also do so in pairs or groups. Another way for each student to speak about found matches is to contribute to a “snow ball story.” For this activity, students sit in a circle. Taking turns, each student includes the word of a found match to a fantasy story that can be silly. Once added, the speaker places the corresponding word and image card in the center so that all story makers can see the sequence of the evolving story. When it is their turn, each person repeats the evolving story including the previous person’s contribution and adds his/her matched card content to the story.



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**Table 2: Suggested EL Literature for Read-Alouds**

<b>Books about acculturation and language acquisition issues</b>
1. The picture book with cartoon-like illustrations <i>I hate English</i> by Ellen Levine tells the story of a Chinese immigrant girl who resists learning English because she is afraid to forget Chinese. A teacher helps her embrace both languages gradually.
2. In <i>Marianthe's story</i> , Aiki shares two stories of her own early language and acculturation experiences as an immigrant. She illustrated this picture book in a way that makes it easy to talk about such experiences.
3. In <i>One green apple</i> by Eve Bunting, a newcomer with no English joins classmates visiting an apple orchard. Peers, teacher and her own observations help her learn to get more acculturated. The watercolor illustrations with close-up views of faces are inviting for conversations.
<b>Books about refugee experiences</b>
1. In <i>The journey</i> by Francesca Senna tells the story of a refugee boy and his family's refugee journey. It is based on true events and allows young readers to connect with the exhaustion and heartbreak many refugees encounter when involuntarily displaced by war.
2. In <i>Stepping stones</i> by Margriet Ruurs, a girl shares her family's refugee story as they flee from Syria to a safe place in Europe. The language is simple and poetic. Illustrations consist of stone structures made by a Syrian artist for this book.
3. The picture book <i>When water makes mud. A story of refugee children</i> by Janie Reinhart gives insight into why children can end up in a refugee camp and what they do to brighten their lives.

### **Educators Oral Language Support**

Educators use words, phrases and idioms that are needed to comprehend curriculum-based content and that help especially newcomers learn basic life vocabulary. The use of realistic images provides ELs with real life connections to vocabulary. For the work with idioms and pictures, educators select idioms that are commonly used in school or other settings. Tedd Arnold's comically illustrated idiom picture book collections *Parts* (2000), *More parts* (2003) and *Even more parts* (2007), Marvin Terban's illustrated idioms *In a pickle* (2007) or Denise Brennan-Nelson's illustrated *My Momma likes to say* books with information on the origin of idioms are great, classic resource for this activity. Language structures commonly used during such practices are *I can use a + [noun] when I + [action]*. For adjectives, students can use structures such as *I am + [adjective] when I + [action] because I...* Students can practice idioms using structures such as *I am in a pickle when + [action/situation]*.

### **Game 7: Read-aloud Text Puzzle**

#### **Activity description**

Pairs of students receive a sealable bag that contains copies of pictures from a picture book story or illustrated text passage. Depending on language skills, students receive three up to eight images to first place face-up in front of them and then to sequence them according to the read-aloud from the teacher or a peer. Prior to the read-aloud, the educator facilitates essential vocabulary knowledge, necessary background knowledge and what students predict about the story. Then students put pictures in the correct sequence as the educator reads the text to students several times until students have placed their pictures in a correct sequence. Next, students retell the story to each other pointing to the pictures and using pre-taught sentence structures. As a follow-up activity, students can sequence images differently and tell their own story.

### **Educators Oral Language Support**

Educators select stories/texts containing images that illustrate content easy to use for retelling purposes. Educators make preferably laminated copies of 3-8 images on card stock paper with small numbers on the back of each picture card to allow students to self-correct the sequence of events or facts shared in a read-aloud.

Useful language structures with clear transition words for students to practice sequencing of events or facts are: First/next/then/but then/afterwards/finally + [action/fact]. To enhance students' written recognition of these or other transition words and key vocabulary, they can be included in the materials on small word slips. Students can place these under the matching pictures. Any specific, important descriptive words or phrases can be placed on such word slips.

For such read-alouds, books about ELs can be used to a) provide biblio-therapy for ELs (Osorio, 2018) and b) to support native speakers in becoming more compassionate peers who understand ELs' social and academic integration challenges better (Kuehl, 2021). Read-aloud books about ELs with clear illustrations that invite dialog about their lives are displayed in the **Table 2** (for more examples see <https://www.colorincolorado.org/booklist/refugee-experience-books-children>).

### **Conclusion**

This article shares a selected number of research-evidenced and field-tested playful oral language learning activities (POLLAs) for early childhood educators to engage ELs and their peers in focused oral language practices. These activities are easy to infuse in existing curricula. The educator oral language support information for each activity provides sentence frames for oral dialog



to explicitly practice with students. Moreover, the information about BICS and CALP and characteristics of language and acculturation challenges ELs face, serve as a basic frame of reference for any EL-sensitive language-fostering activities beyond the scope of this paper.

The POLLAs guidelines and sentence frame examples provided in this article assist early childhood educators in developing their own sentence frames for other POLLAs that lack this information. One helpful additional EL-strategies classic is Klippel's (2013) *Keep talking*. Another one is the free-of charge electronic GO-TO strategies resource (Levine, et al., 2013, see <https://www.cal.org/what-we-do/projects/project-excell/the-go-to-strategies>) that lists ELs' language levels for each activity.

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## Vamos a jugar:

# Desarrollando las competencias de lenguaje oral a través del juego con los niños que aprenden inglés en las aulas de K-3

Elke Schneider y Andrea Kulmhofer-Bommer



dizaje de los EL (Villegas, et al., 2018). Por lo tanto, este artículo (1) ayuda a los educadores a comprender mejor las diversas necesidades de aprendizaje social y académico de los EL en sus diferentes etapas de adquisición y aculturación del lenguaje, y (2) presenta actividades de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral lúdico y fijadas para EL centradas en el estudiante y que alinean con los estándares específicos de EL (Asociación Internacional TESOL, 2006) y con las adaptaciones identificadas (Ariza & Coady, 2018).

### Introducción

Hay varias razones para centrarse en los hablantes no nativos de inglés o que aprenden inglés (EL por sus siglas en inglés) y su desarrollo del lenguaje oral en los entornos de K-3. Por un lado, los EL representan la población estudiantil de más rápido crecimiento en los Estados Unidos con un aumento de más del 50 por ciento desde 2010 en casi todos los estados, especialmente en la región sur de los Estados Unidos (Departamento de Educación de los Estados Unidos, 2017a). Además, es una tarea muy trabajosa para los EL convertirse en usuarios del inglés que entienden las características socioculturales y lingüísticas de este complejo idioma (Ariza y Coady, 2018). En comparación con los *hablantes nativos*, los EL de primera generación o recién llegados que a menudo han experimentado traumas migratorios (Dutro, 2019; Guirguis & Longley, 2020), estos no han tenido la oportunidad de adquirir los fundamentos del inglés antes de ingresar al preescolar o jardín de infantes (Fielding, et al., 2017). Ellos tienen una gran brecha lingüística y de aculturación que llenar. *Los EL de segunda generación cuyos padres emigraron a los Estados Unidos*, también se enfrentan constantemente al desafío de procesar las diferencias y similitudes entre el inglés y sus idiomas y tradiciones de origen (Ariza y Coady, 2018; Yehuda & Lehner, 2018). Por lo tanto es importante que los educadores de la primera infancia estén conscientes de la diversidad lingüística y de aculturación de los EL para apoyarlos de manera efectiva.

A menudo, los educadores de la primera infancia, quienes de aquí en adelante denominaremos educadores, carecen de la capacitación adecuada para satisfacer las necesidades de apren-

### Fundamentos del aprendizaje de idiomas orales para EL

Las habilidades de lenguaje oral bien desarrolladas, en este artículo denominadas competencias, son la base para habilidades académicas exitosas de lectura, escritura y ortografía (Stagnitti, et al., 2016; Jennings & Haynes, 2018). Las competencias del lenguaje oral incluyen destrezas efectivas de escucha y habla, ya que ambas son necesarias para comunicarse de manera competente (Ariza y Coady, 2018). En consecuencia, el desarrollo de competencias de lenguaje oral para escenarios sociales y académicos en entornos de K-3 requiere un enfoque explícito en las habilidades de habla social y académica adecuadas y las *habilidades de comprensión auditiva* (Jennings y Haynes, 2018; Zwiers & Hamerla, 2017). Para adquirir estas competencias, los EL junto con todos los demás estudiantes, deben tener conciencia de cómo pronunciar y usar palabras, frases y oraciones de manera gramatical y socialmente apropiada. Además, los EL deben comprender y usar características de comunicación no verbal (es decir, gestos, posturas, expresiones faciales) y características del lenguaje como el tono de voz o la pausa de manera culturalmente apropiada para lograr los objetivos de comunicación (Foorman, 2015; Khalifa & Fallal, 2017). Estas características constituyen alrededor del 80 por ciento de la comunicación oral y complementan el lenguaje oral a menudo fragmentario (Hull, 2016). Es decir, si los EL no tienen la competencia lingüística para responder a una pregunta correctamente, pueden complementar su expresión con gestos o expresiones faciales para ser entendidos.



Los EL luchan con la adquisición de competencias de lenguaje oral por varias razones. Por un lado, las variaciones del lenguaje pueden complicar el desarrollo de las competencias orales académicas necesarias para la escuela. Además, los EL tardan entre dos y tres años en adquirir *habilidades básicas de comunicación interpersonal* (BICS según las siglas en inglés) similares a las de los hablantes nativos que se utilizan fuera del aula y en interacciones interpersonales y sociales. Adquirir el *dominio del lenguaje académico cognitivo* (CALP, según las siglas en inglés) similar al de un hablante nativo y necesario para participar en el diálogo académico oral y escrito sobre información específica de un contenido, por ejemplo, en ciencias y estudios sociales, que toma entre siete y nueve años (Cummins, 1980). Cada persona progresa a un ritmo individual dependiendo de la historia de la migración y el apoyo socioemocional en la escuela y en el hogar. Los EL con educación formal nula o muy limitada en su primer idioma necesitan aún más tiempo para lograr habilidades de habla de nivel nativo para BICS y CALP (Ariza & Coady, 2018; Cummins, 2015). Por lo tanto, no es raro que los EL se comuniquen cómodamente durante el recreo con compañeros o adultos, mientras guardan silencio en el aula ya que la aplicación de CALP es mucho más compleja y exigente que la aplicación de BICS. En consecuencia, los educadores deben ser conscientes de que la participación de los EL en actividades lúdicas del lenguaje oral depende de su etapa de adquisición y *aculturación del lenguaje*.

Durante el proceso de *adquisición* del idioma, los EL pasan por fases de prueba y error a medida que se acercan gradualmente a al nivel de competencia del idioma del hablante nativo. Los EL lo hacen escuchando a hablantes nativos, practicando para expresarse en inglés e incorporando retroalimentación correctiva de su entorno. Este proceso ofrece la oportunidad de aprender de los errores, especialmente cuando los educadores proporcionan respuestas correctivas positivas, como reformular lo que los niños dijeron en inglés correcto (Selinker, 2013). El término *aculturación* se refiere a un proceso continuo de el aprendizaje de ele sobre normas culturales desconocidas mientras continúa participando en la cultura original del hogar con el objetivo de saber cuándo y cómo aplicar las normas de cada cultura (Schwartz y Unger, 2017).

A medida que los EL aculturán y adquieren el nuevo idioma, pasan por varias fases a un ritmo individual que depende de su historia personal y circunstancias de vida. El éxito de los EL en la adquisición del lenguaje y la aculturación están entrelazados. Los educadores desempeñan un papel importante para ayudar a los EL a tener éxito en ambos dominios. Por ejemplo, los recién llegados se encuentran en una fase silenciosa durante semanas en la que los educadores necesitan usar gestos, imágenes y soporte de lenguaje claro y repetitivo para ayudarlos a progresar de respuestas de una sola palabra a respuestas de oración completa. Esto es posible en un entorno seguro que permite a los EL asumir riesgos al expresarse. Cuanto mejor informados estén los educadores sobre la historia y la vida en el hogar de los EL, más efectivo será su apoyo. En este proceso, los EL pasan por *un choque cultural* debido al agobio dada la complejidad del nuevo lenguaje y las demandas de aculturación que se les imponen du-



rante todo el día. Los signos como son retraerse y fatiga pueden dar la impresión de un alumno desmotivado y desinteresado. Sin embargo, esta es una fase natural por la que pasan todos los EL, independientemente de las habilidades lingüísticas. Los educadores deben responder con especial atención, cuidado y comprensión para que los EL progresen hacia un compromiso activo con el nuevo idioma y cultura (Ariza y Coady, 2018).

### Principios del aprendizaje y enseñanza del lenguaje oral a través del juego

Cohen (2018) resume décadas de investigación que destacan la importancia de las experiencias de aprendizaje lúdico en la educación temprana. Un componente esencial de tales experiencias lúdicas es el fomento de las competencias lingüísticas orales entre hablantes nativos y no nativos (August & Shanahan, 2006; Zwiers & Hamerla, 2017). Entre los beneficios importantes del aprendizaje a través del juego se encuentran las siguientes:

1. proporcionar experiencias de aprendizaje apropiadas para el desarrollo que fomenten la resolución creativa de problemas en escenarios alegres (Mraz et al., 2019),
2. fomentar el desarrollo cognitivo en preparación para tareas académicas más avanzadas como leer y escribir (McLeod, et al., 2017),
3. ayudar a los niños a procesar experiencias adversas en entornos domésticos (Haas & Ray, 2020) incluyendo experiencias traumáticas que muchos EL pueden tener (Guirguis & Longley, 2020);
4. mediar problemas de comportamiento (Gerard Kaduson, et al., 2019),
5. fortalecer una variedad de habilidades de alfabetización, incluidas las habilidades de lenguaje oral (Stagnitti, et al., 2016).

En el contexto de este artículo, '*juego*' se refiere a experiencias lúdicas de aprendizaje de idiomas que involucran a los estudiantes de forma creativa, activando su imaginación para desarrollar competencias que les ayuden a responder de forma efectiva a

una variedad de situaciones. Los autores de este artículo amplían el “juego” más allá del juego espontáneo e incluyen diferentes formas de juegos para fomentar las habilidades del lenguaje oral basadas en a) una selección de actividades apropiadas para la edad y las habilidades con objetivos claros alcanzables, b) una organización cuidadosa de las actividades lúdicas que despiertan la

curiosidad sensorial y cognitiva, y aseguran el compromiso creativo, y c) la preparación adecuada de todos los participantes para que la actividad sea alegre y enriquecedora. Esto incluye proporcionar vocabulario y estructuras lingüísticas necesarias o marcos de oraciones antes o durante una actividad lúdica según las pautas descritas en la siguiente sección (Allsop & Yessel, 2015). Tradi-

**Tabla 1: Directrices para la planificación, el apoyo y el análisis de las expresiones orales**

<b>Planificación de actividades lúdicas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identifique los estándares y las metas del currículo y los objetivos específicos de la lección resultantes para una actividad lúdica centrada en el alumno.</li> <li>• Consulte con el maestro de ESOL sobre los objetivos lingüísticos específicos establecidos para EL (WIDA, 2021).</li> <li>• Decida sobre la actividad de mejora de la competencia oral lúdica y los manipulativos. (es decir, juguetes / herramientas para juegos, artículos / listas de palabras para juegos de adivinar).</li> <li>• Seleccione el vocabulario y las estructuras de diálogo que satisfagan las necesidades de adquisición y aculturación del lenguaje de los EL.</li> <li>• Planifique cuidadosamente el emparejamiento de el elo con hablantes nativos para garantizar el uso del lenguaje natural y las conexiones entre los EL y los hablantes nativos.</li> <li>• Prepare reglas de actividad que garanticen que los EL tenga la oportunidad de participar de acuerdo con sus niveles de habilidad lingüística y prepare reglas de juego con imágenes para que los EL puedan procesar lo que escuchan / leen más fácilmente (Ariza y Coady, 2018).</li> <li>• Diseñar un gráfico de seguimiento del progreso. (Vea el ejemplo en la <b>figura 1</b>) que incluya habilidades orales y estructuras lingüísticas</li> </ul>
<b>Preparar a los estudiantes para actividades lúdicas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Enseñe previamente el lenguaje necesario para los juegos utilizando imágenes y gestos para los recién llegados y proporcione práctica oral repetida antes de comenzar el juego seleccionado</li> <li>• Cree parejas de EL con hablantes nativos y modele antes de una actividad lúdica cómo los miembros del equipo pueden apoyar a los EL en el juego. (Ariza &amp; Coady, 2018)</li> <li>• Modele explícitamente las reglas de actividad para los estudiantes con gestos, imágenes (y mensajes de texto según sea necesario)</li> </ul>
<b>Apoyar las actividades de lenguaje lúdico durante el tiempo de juego / juego</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite pero no obligue a los EL a hablar cuando no estén listos. En su lugar, permítales participar no verbalmente si es necesario (Ariza y Coady, 2018).</li> <li>• Escuche las actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral que ocurren en parejas o grupos pequeños y brinde apoyo al idioma. Según sea necesario, use gestos o imágenes para abordar las necesidades de vocabulario.</li> <li>• Reformule una respuesta fragmentada en la estructura adecuada y, cuando sea apropiado, haga que el estudiante EL la repita para que este pueda escuchar y usar la estructura de lenguaje correcta sin detener el intercambio de diálogos en una actividad lúdica.</li> <li>• Use dispositivos de traducción y permita que los EL los usen (es decir, diccionario de imágenes, diccionario, una tableta, teléfono inteligente) cuando los gestos no ayuden.</li> <li>• Antes de usar elogios verbales y no verbales como los gestos, asegúrese de que los EL comprendan los componentes específicos de la cultura de los elogios (Ariza y Coady, 2018).</li> <li>• Modele para los compañeros cómo proporcionar apoyo lingüístico y dé a un EL el tiempo adecuado para participar en un diálogo lúdico, cuando sea apropiado para su edad.</li> <li>• Proporcione marcos de oraciones por escrito en pequeñas tarjetas de diálogo silenciosas para los EL que pueden leer y hacer que usen estas tarjetas durante un juego (consulte Zwiers, 2019) y use dibujos o imágenes para que los no lectores aprendan sobre las estructuras del lenguaje oral a usar.</li> <li>• Utilice el gráfico de supervisión del progreso diseñado para documentar el progreso del alumno.</li> <li>• Responda a las necesidades que surjan modelando las tareas nuevamente, proporcionando apoyo de vocabulario, respondiendo preguntas, incitando a los estudiantes o reformulando.</li> </ul>
<b>Seguimiento después de actividades lúdicas</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analice los datos de monitoreo del progreso y otras notas anecdóticas para decidir sobre los futuros puntos de enfoque de la práctica oral y las actividades lúdicas.</li> <li>• Diseñar actividades de aprendizaje oral de seguimiento que refuercen o amplíen la práctica previa del lenguaje oral (es decir, los EL escriben o dibujan una respuesta a indicaciones visuales, escritas u orales).</li> </ul>

cionalmente, en los primeros años de educación, los juegos ayudan a los estudiantes a desarrollar habilidades lingüísticas sociales y académicas (Cohen, 2018). La enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros y de segunda lengua también implementa juegos para fomentar las habilidades de comunicación (Ariza y Coady, 2018).

## Pautas para planificar, apoyar y analizar el rendimiento oral

Antes de compartir actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral, las siguientes pautas generales (**Tabla 1**) ayudan a los educadores a planificar, implementar, monitorear y profundizar las experiencias lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral para los EL.

Al considerar estas pautas, es crucial seleccionar y pre-enseñar estructuras lingüísticas sociales y académicas esenciales para que los EL puedan adoptarlas como vocabulario activo a través de la participación alegre en el juego. Además del lenguaje necesario para participar en el juego, los EL también necesitan apoyo explícito para expresar sus necesidades de comprensión (es decir, *¿Qué quieres decir con ..., por favor dí esto de nuevo. No entendi., ¿Qué hace... media?*). Además, los recién llegados sin suficientes habilidades lingüísticas, dependen de las pistas que ofrecen las imágenes y gestos para formar una idea de cómo se forman las oraciones o preguntas en inglés. Por ejemplo, una figura puede representar la fuerza de actuación en una oración/pregunta (sujeto, lugar de la persona o cosa). Una línea zig-zag con una flecha apuntando a la derecha puede ilustrar la acción del verbo. La imagen de un árbol puede ilustrar dónde aparece la información del lugar, y un reloj puede ilustrar dónde debe ocurrir la información del tiempo en una oración. Además, al implementar actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral, es esencial iniciar un diálogo auténtico entre los EL y sus pares nativos. Para los recién llegados, es útil emparejarlos con otro EL con habilidades lingüísticas más avanzadas para el apoyo espontáneo del lenguaje durante las actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral (Ariza & Coady, 2018).

## Competencias del lenguaje oral fomentadas a través del juego

Las habilidades del lenguaje oral deben enseñarse explícitamente, según demostrado por investigaciones durante décadas (August & Shanahan, 2006; Stockard, et al., 2018). En la mayoría de los estados de los Estados Unidos, las evaluaciones nacionales anuales del dominio del idioma inglés oral para los EL en los grados K-12, desarrolladas por el Consorcio de Diseño y Evaluación Instruccional de Clase Mundial (WIDA por sus siglas en inglés) presionan a los educadores a que proporcionen instrucción explícita del lenguaje oral a los niños EL, quienes luchan con estas evaluaciones sin suficiente práctica explícita. Los EL participan en las pruebas ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State) que forman parte del Modelo WIDA (Medida de Desarrollo del Idioma Inglés) (WIDA, 2021).

Las siguientes actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral, evidenciadas por la investigación y centradas en el es-

tudiante, destacan cómo infundir instrucción explícita de idiomas para que los EL fomenten las competencias comunicativas (Maqfirah y Chairina, 2018). Las actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral seleccionadas consisten en juegos de adivinanzas y emparejamientos que fomentan el pensamiento crítico y las habilidades de resolución de problemas (Allsop & Yessel, 2015; Cohen, 2018). Para ayudar a los educadores a identificar estructuras lingüísticas específicas para apoyar a los EL en estos juegos, cada actividad consiste de una descripción de la actividad, y recordatorios de apoyo al lenguaje oral de los educadores que incluyen ejemplos explícitos de estructuras lingüísticas comunes para una actividad. Los tipos de estructuras de apoyo al lenguaje específico del juego pueden ser diferentes oraciones o marcos de preguntas que incluyen maneras para describir, comparar, predecir o expresar una opinión o razón. Estos pueden ser pre-enseñados o proporcionados durante las actividades lúdicas de aprendizaje del lenguaje oral. Algunas actividades sólo requieren respuestas de una palabra o frase con pronunciación, enunciación y fluidez adecuadas. Otras actividades llevan a los estudiantes a usar oraciones completas y diferentes tipos de preguntas. Esto ofrece a los educadores opciones según las necesidades de apoyo del lenguaje oral de los aprendices. Si bien muchos juegos están disponibles comercialmente, los educadores se benefician de juegos de diseño propio adaptados a las necesidades del alumno y al contenido del plan de estudios. Los miembros del equipo cada grado pueden trabajar juntos para expandir el repertorio de manera eficiente con el tiempo. Los siguientes juegos proporcionan ideas para tales juegos con un enfoque de lenguaje especial. Los autores y sus estudiantes los han utilizado con éxito durante décadas.

### Juego 1: Adivinar las imágenes

#### Descripción de la actividad

Los estudiantes trabajan en grupos pequeños. Una persona saca una imagen de un sobre y debe responder preguntas sobre la imagen del resto del grupo que adivina lo que muestra la imagen. Las tarjetas de preguntas dan a los jugadores una idea de qué tipo de preguntas hacer. Las tarjetas incluyen indicaciones como "número", "cuándo", "dónde", "temperatura", "color," o "tamaño". Los jugadores que adivinan crean imágenes mentales basadas en las respuestas recibidas y les dicen a los miembros de su equipo qué imagen ven en sus cabezas diciendo "Lo que escuchó me hace imaginar..." Cuando los que adivinan han identificado la imagen, los roles pueden cambiar continuando con una nueva imagen.

#### Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral

Los educadores seleccionan imágenes de revistas o recursos didácticos que muestran una sola acción simple con pocos caracteres. El contenido de las imágenes debe cumplir con el conocimiento de fondo de los estudiantes. Los educadores rotan entre los grupos y brindan apoyo lingüístico, señalan tarjetas de preguntas y toman notas sobre los desafíos del idioma (consulte la tabla de monitoreo del progreso que aparece en la figura 1. Los educadores proporcionan marcos de oraciones visuales o escritas en tarjetas pequeñas o pizarras blancas portátiles para que los EL los usen según sea necesario. Estas "tarjetas de en-



**Figura 1: Tabla de seguimiento del progreso de las competencias orales**

Fecha:				
Descripción de la tarea:				
Objetivo de aprendizaje:				
Habilidades lingüísticas orales seleccionadas	Estudiante 1	Estudiante 2	Estudiante ...	Comentarios
<b>Comprensión auditiva</b>				
Mantiene el contacto visual adecuado				
Señala la atención al hablante (no /verbalmente)				
<b>Parlante</b>				
Utiliza signos apropiados de comunicación no verbal de aprobación, desaprobación, (no) comprensión				
Hace preguntas para la comprensión				
Responde a las preguntas de manera comprensible (gestos, palabras, frases)				
Respuestas con sí/no				
Respuestas s en oraciones completas (con o sin error)				
Clave de codificación (ejemplo):				
✓✓ no se necesita ninguna mejora, realizada de forma independiente				
✓ Alguna mejora necesaria, hecha correctamente después de la solicitud				
-- se necesita una mejora significativa, respuesta incorrecta después de la solicitud				

trenamiento silenciosas” pueden tener códigos de colores y / o imágenes para ciertos componentes como palabras de preguntas, verbos, actor, tiempo o información de lugar.

Los estudiantes necesitan conocer las estructuras de oraciones para preguntas como *¿Dónde está...? ¿Está ...? ¿Dentro o fuera?, ¿Cuántos.... ¿Hay? Cuándo/A qué hora del día/de la noche? ¿Es.... más grande/más pequeño que...?* Los jugadores también deben ser capaces de comprender y formar respuestas a tales preguntas utilizando estructuras como *.... Es más grande que..., ... es tan grande como..., Hay/hay/La acción es .... , .... sucede en .....* Además, los oyentes practican la comprensión de lo que los compañeros comparten en las descripciones de las imágenes que comienzan con *Lo que dices me hace imaginar ...* Practican la expresión de acuerdo o desacuerdo utilizando estructuras como *Yo no estoy de acuerdo con esto porque ...* La investigación muestra que estas prácticas mejoran significativamente las habilidades de habla y comprensión académica de los EL y de los hablantes nativos (Atoum y Resiq, 2018; Christodoulou, et al., 2017)

### Juego 2: Charadas o Juegos de Mímica

#### Descripción de la actividad

Los estudiantes trabajan en equipos para adivinar lo que un miembro de otro equipo actúa. El equipo que adivina dice lo que creen que representa el gesto. El ganador es el equipo que

primero adivine la palabra o frase actuada. El educador comparte palabras o expresiones para adivinar por escrito, en forma de imágenes realistas, o las susurra al oído del actor.

### Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral

Los educadores seleccionan material para adivinar que los estudiantes pueden representar. Los siguientes componentes del lenguaje se prestan bien para esta actividad: Verbos y frases verbales (*escuchar, leer, comer buscar vs. mirar vs. mirar hacia arriba para...*), adjetivos (*triste, gruñón, fuerte*), sustantivos como profesiones o herramientas (*pintor, escoba*) o modismos, especialmente aquellos utilizados con frecuencia por educadores y estudiantes (*mantén tus ojos para ti mismo, dame una mano*). Al tomar decisiones en equipo sobre lo que significa un gesto, los estudiantes necesitan estructuras lingüísticas como *creo que esto es / significa... porque...; Esto parece que alguien es \_\_\_ un \_\_\_ (sustantivo) / \_\_\_ (adjetivo)*. Los estudiantes que actúan con palabras y expresiones deben comprender las ideas de sus compañeros y ajustar sus gestos en función de lo que escuchan.

### Juego 3: Diccionario pictórico

#### Descripción de la actividad

Para un diccionario pictórico, se aplican las mismas rutinas de juego que se describen para las charadas. La única diferencia es

que los estudiantes dibujen representaciones de una palabra o expresión en lugar de actuarlas.

#### **Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral**

Los educadores proporcionan palabras o frases pre-enseñadas y que los jugadores pueden dibujar. Los jugadores necesitan tener habilidades motoras finas para poner dibujos básicos en papel o en pizarras blancas. También deben ser capaces de comprender las respuestas de los compañeros y de responder a las preguntas. Para adivinar y escuchar, los estudiantes deben poder usar las mismas estructuras de oraciones que se indican para *los juegos de mímica*.

#### **Juego 4: Silla caliente**

##### **Descripción de la actividad**

Cada estudiante debe adivinar la palabra/ frase o imagen en la parte posterior. Para encontrar la respuesta correcta, cada persona hace preguntas y escucha las respuestas de aquellos que pueden ver la información oculta. Basado en imágenes visuales, el adivinador dice a los jugadores *Lo que dices me hace imaginar...* y hace preguntas más específicas. Otra forma es tener a estudiantes emparejados, en grupos pequeños, o caminando por el salón pidiendo a cualquier miembro de la clase o educador información fijada a sus espaldas. En una variación de este juego, el que jugador que le toca adivinar se sienta de espaldas a un tablero o rotafolio que muestra la palabra o frase para adivinar. El resto del grupo/clase puede ver la palabra o frase y ayuda al adivinador con las respuestas. Una vez que se identifica una palabra / término clave, otro estudiante asume el papel de adivinador.

#### **Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral**

Los educadores aclaran el área temática para cada ronda de adivinanzas (es decir, mamíferos o personas famosas de las que acabamos de enterarnos). Los adivinadores deben estar familiarizados con una variedad de estructuras de preguntas e hipótesis, como pedir / suponer cual es la edad, el tamaño y otras características. Los adivinadores y los oyentes necesitan ser capaces de entenderse entre sí. Todas estas son estructuras similares a las que se enumeran en la descripción del juego para "Adivinación de imágenes".

#### **Juego 5: Detective táctil**

##### **Descripción de la actividad**

Para esta actividad basada en Montessori (Montessori, et al., 2017), los jugadores trabajan en parejas. Un jugador tiene los ojos vendados con los ojos vendados con una bufanda o una venda en los ojos con volantes en la parte inferior para evitar ver a través de los intentos (por ejemplo, ver <https://www.montessoriservices.com/blindfold>) y adivina lo que un compañero coloca en sus manos o lo que siente. El estudiante con los ojos vendados describe cómo se siente el artículo en la mano y, en última instancia, plantea la hipótesis de cuál es el artículo. Los artículos pueden ser cosas o letras grandes cortadas de papel de arena u otros materiales sensibles al tacto. Los estudiantes sensibles a tener los ojos vendados alcanzan con las manos a través de agujeros en una bolsa grande o una caja de zapatos cerrada.

#### **Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral**

Los educadores deben seleccionar elementos que sean seguros (sin bordes afilados ni puntos finales) y conocidos para los estudiantes. Los estudiantes con los ojos vendados necesitan marcos de oraciones como "*Esto se siente como ... tiene algo así como un.... Me hace pensar que es ....*", "*¿Puedo yo (o alguien más) usar esto para...? o ¿Qué puedo hacer con esto?*" El socio del equipo que ve proporciona respuestas utilizando estructuras como Estas en la dirección correcta al pensar así. Para una indicación de guía, el compañero puede usar estructuras como *Lo que sostienes en tus manos puedes usar para + [acción], Piensa en ...*

#### **Juego 6: Coincidencia palabra-imagen, frase-imagen o modismo-imagen**

##### **Descripción de la actividad**

Para esta actividad de emparejamiento y conversación, los estudiantes deben ser capaces de leer palabras, frases o modismos escritos en tarjetas de idioma y estar familiarizados con las imágenes que representan el significado de estas tarjetas de idioma. La primera tarea es hacer coincidir el significado de una tarjeta de idioma con una tarjeta de imagen (modelo de juego de memoria) colocada boca arriba frente a ellos. A nivel de palabra, son posibles tres tareas de coincidencia diferentes: (1) coincidencias de una sola palabra-imagen, (2) hacer coincidir dos palabras que componen una palabra compuesta con una imagen (es decir, *zapato y encaje, cabeza y banda*), y (3) hacer coincidir un prefijo y una tarjeta de palabras raíz (es decir, *un y feliz, re y leer*) con una imagen. La investigación muestra que el enfoque temprano en las palabras raíz de prefijo es beneficioso para los hablantes nativos y no nativos (Manyak y Manyak, 2018; Raudszus et al., 2021).

A nivel de frase, las tarjetas de lenguaje muestran dos o más palabras que no componen una oración completa (Matthews, 2014), como *lavarme las manos o dos niños en una bañera* y los estudiantes las emparejan con una imagen. Tal práctica a nivel de frase es importante porque proporciona una transición a la comprensión de oraciones (Ariza y Coady, 2018). A nivel de oración, los estudiantes coinciden con modismos como ¡Dame una mano! o Mantén tus ojos para ti mismo con una imagen. Estas son expresiones figurativas que significan algo diferente a su significado literal (Matthews, 2014) y son una característica del lenguaje desafiante para los EL. Una vez que los estudiantes han encontrado coincidencias, los estudiantes hablan sobre sus palabras e imágenes coincidentes. Los educadores piden a los estudiantes que a) digan palabras y expresiones individuales o b) describan lo que ven en sus tarjetas o c) compartan asociaciones. Los estudiantes también pueden hacerlo en parejas o grupos. Otra forma en que cada estudiante puede hablar sobre las coincidencias encontradas es contribuir a una "historia de bolas de nieve". Para esta actividad, los estudiantes se sientan en círculo. Por turnos, cada estudiante incluye la palabra de una coincidencia encontrada en una historia de fantasía que puede ser tonta. Una vez agregado, el orador coloca la tarjeta de palabras e imágenes correspondiente en el centro para que todos los creadores de historias puedan ver la secuencia de la historia en evolución. Cuando es su turno, cada persona repite la histo-

ria en secuencia, incluida la contribución de la persona anterior, y agrega su contenido de tarjeta coincidente a la historia.

### Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral

Los educadores usan palabras, frases y modismos que son necesarios para comprender el contenido basado en el currículo y que ayudan especialmente a los recién llegados a aprender vocabulario básico para la vida. El uso de imágenes realistas proporciona a los EL conexiones de la vida real con el vocabulario. Para el trabajo con modismos e imágenes, los educadores seleccionan modismos que se usan comúnmente en la escuela u otros entornos. Las colecciones de libros ilustrados cómicamente de Tedd Arnold *Parts* (2000), *More parts* (2003) e *Even more parts* (2007), los modismos ilustrados de Marvin Terban *In a pickle* (2007) o *My Momma likes to say* de Denise Brennan-Nelson los libros con información sobre el origen de los modismos son un gran recurso clásico para esta actividad. Las estructuras lingüísticas comúnmente utilizadas durante las prácticas son donde pueden usar sustantivos para describir la acción. Para los adjetivos, los estudiantes pueden usar estructuras como *Yo soy + [adjetivo] cuando yo + [acción]* porque yo. Los estudiantes pueden practicar modismos usando estructuras como *Estoy en un apuro cuando + [acción / situación]*.

### Juego 7: Rompecabezas de palabras para lectura en voz alta

#### Descripción de la actividad

Los pares de estudiantes reciben una bolsa sellable que contiene copias de imágenes de una historia de un libro ilustrado o un pasaje de texto ilustrado. Dependiendo de las habilidades lingüísticas, los estudiantes reciben de tres a ocho imágenes para colocarlas primero boca arriba frente a ellos y luego secuenciarlas de acuerdo con la lectura en voz alta del maestro o un compañero. Antes de la lectura en voz alta, el educador facilita el conocimiento esencial del vocabulario, el conocimiento de fon-

do necesario y lo que los estudiantes predicen sobre la historia. Luego, los estudiantes ponen imágenes en la secuencia correcta a medida que el educador lee el texto a los estudiantes varias veces hasta que los estudiantes hayan colocado sus imágenes en una secuencia correcta. A continuación, los estudiantes vuelven a contar la historia entre sí señalando las imágenes y utilizando estructuras de oraciones pre-enseñadas. Como actividad de seguimiento, los estudiantes pueden secuenciar imágenes de manera diferente y contar su propia historia.

### Apoyo al Lenguaje Oral

Los educadores seleccionan historias / textos que contienen imágenes que ilustran contenido fácil de usar para volver a contar. Los educadores hacen preferiblemente copias laminadas de 3-8 imágenes en papel de cartulina con números pequeños en la parte posterior de cada imagen para permitir a los estudiantes la autocorrección de la secuencia de eventos o hechos que se comparten en voz alta.

Las estructuras lingüísticas útiles con palabras de transición claras para que los estudiantes practiquen la secuenciación de eventos o hechos son: *Primero / siguiente / luego / luego / finalmente + [acción / hecho]*. Para mejorar el reconocimiento escrito de estas u otras palabras de transición y vocabulario clave, se pueden incluir en los materiales en pequeñas hojas de palabras. Los estudiantes pueden colocarlos debajo de las imágenes que coinciden. Cualquier palabra o frase descriptiva específica e importante se puede colocar en tales hojas de palabras.

Para la lecturas en voz alta, los libros sobre EL se pueden usar para servir como biblioterapia para EL (Osorio, 2018) y para apoyar a los hablantes nativos a convertirse en compañeros que entienden mejor los desafíos de integración social y académica de los EL (Kuehl, 2021). En la **Tabla 2** se incluyen libros sobre los EL con ilustraciones claras que invitan al diálogo sobre sus vidas.

**Tabla 2: Literatura de EL para los ruidos de Read-A**

Libros sobre temas de aculturación y adquisición del lenguaje
1. El libro ilustrado con ilustraciones de dibujos animados <i>I hate English</i> de Ellen Levine cuenta la historia de una niña inmigrante china que se resiste a aprender inglés porque tiene miedo de olvidarse del chino. Una maestra la ayuda a abrazar ambos idiomas gradualmente.
2. En <i>Marianthe's story</i> , Aliko comparte dos historias de sus propias experiencias tempranas de lenguaje y aculturación como inmigrante. Ella ilustró este libro ilustrado de una manera que hace que sea fácil hablar sobre tales experiencias.
3. En <i>One green apple</i> de Eve Bunting, una recién llegada sin inglés se une a sus compañeros de clase que visitan un huerto de manzanas. Sus compañeros, la maestra y sus propias observaciones la ayudan a aprender a aculturarse más. Las ilustraciones en acuarela con vistas de cerca de las caras son atractivas para las conversaciones.
Libros sobre experiencias de refugiados
1. En <i>The journey</i> de Francesca Sanna cuenta la historia de un niño refugiado y el viaje de refugiados de su familia. Se basa en hechos reales y permite a los jóvenes lectores conectarse con el agotamiento y la angustia que muchos refugiados encuentran cuando son desplazados involuntariamente por la guerra.
2. En <i>Stepping stones</i> de Margriet Ruurs, una niña comparte la historia de refugiados de su familia mientras huyen de Siria a un lugar seguro en Europa. El lenguaje es simple y poético. Las ilustraciones consisten en estructuras de piedra hechas por un artista sirio para este libro.
3. El libro ilustrado <i>When water makes mud. A story of refugee children</i> de Janie Reinhart da una idea de por qué los niños pueden terminar en un campo de refugiados y qué hacen para alegrar sus vidas.



## Conclusión

Este artículo comparte un número con una selección de actividades de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral basadas en la investigación y probadas para que los educadores de la primera infancia involucren a los EL y sus compañeros en prácticas de lenguaje oral focalizadas. Estas actividades son fáciles de integrar en los planes de estudio existentes. La información de apoyo del lenguaje oral del educador para cada actividad proporciona marcos de oraciones para el diálogo oral para practicar explícitamente con los estudiantes. Además, la información sobre BICS y CALP y las características de los desafíos de lenguaje y aculturación que enfrentan los EL, sirven como un marco de referencia básico para cualquier actividad de fomento del lenguaje sensible a EL más allá del alcance de este documento.

Las pautas de actividades de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral y los ejemplos de marcos de oraciones proporcionados en este artículo ayudan a los educadores de la primera infancia a desarrollar sus propios marcos de oraciones para otras actividades de aprendizaje de lenguaje oral que carecen de esta información. Un clásico adicional útil de las estrategias de EL es el de Klippel (2013) *Keep talking*. Otro es el recurso electrónico gratuito de estrategias GO-TO (Levine, et al., 2013; ver <https://www.cal.org/what-we-do/projects/project-excell/the-go-to-strategies>) que identifica los niveles de lenguaje de los EL para cada actividad.

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# A Toolbox for Engaging Children in Play and Creativity for Learning Across the Domains

Josh Thompson and Nicole Pearce

*“Children are active learners from birth, constantly taking in and organizing information to create meaning through their relationships, their interactions with their environment, and their overall experiences” (National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC], 2020, p. 11).*

## Setting the Stage: The Importance of Play and Creativity

### Creating Self through Play

Look around! Children are at play (Table 1). All these playful experiences were fun! As children laughed and repeated these experiences, they were actually at work creating themselves through active play. The big kids chose their games, and the little ones followed along, gleeful, expectant. The choices children made, even from infancy, were meaningful, purposeful, and engaging. These choices set in active learning conditions are not reserved for a select few, those who ‘get their work done’ or some other arbitrary criteria. Optimal learning and development occur when all children engage in continual opportunities for play and creativity (NAEYC, 2019).

### Study of Play and Creativity

Creativity is a spark – Play is the fuel that sets that spark ablaze.

The active study of play and creativity demonstrates the value of playful, creative learning to teachers, caregivers, and families (Bush et al., 2013; Frost et al., 2012; Gronlund & Rendon, 2015; Huizinga, 1949; Isbell & Yoshizawa, 2020; Koralek, 2005; Koralek et al., 2015; Master-son & Bohart, 2019; Murphy, 2015; NAEYC, 2014; Tok, 2021; Yates & Twigg, 2017). The study of play and creativity is international in scope as one of the rights of children. Many organizations focus on play such as NAEYC, The International Play Association (<https://ipaworld.org/>), and Clemson University, in South



Carolina, through an Annual Conference of the US Play Coalition (<https://usplaycoalition.org/>).

### The Child’s Right to Play

“The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation

**Table 1 Play and creativity in three vignettes**

**Play and creativity among siblings:** When Charlotte became a mobile infant, scooting and crawling around on the floor, she attempted to join in the high energy movement activities of her big sisters. When they would come through, giggling and squealing in the delight of their game, she would light up, looking up expectantly, watching them move through quickly. When they passed, she would scoot toward the door they just exited, until she heard them coming up from behind – they had gone all around the house and were coming in the other way. She repeated this cycle of follow and rebound many times, always the same procedure, first looking where they left, then turning to watch them come again.

**Play and creativity through objects:** Declan got a present for their first birthday. Their family prepared a space in the family room, and brought in a white shelf, with a bow on it. The family gave Declan an empty shelf for their first birthday. A few of their favorite toys were soon placed strategically within their grasp. They quickly learned to play with their toys, and then replace them back to the appropriate space on the shelf. While three toys occupied the second shelf, the bottom shelf, at floor level, only had two items. Exploring the empty space in the corner, Declan climbed inside – they put themselves on their shelf, to take themselves out to play.

**Play and creativity through the arts:** Three-year-old Beiwen was excited about the bugs he found on the playground. When asked about it, he shared a few details. But, when given the opportunity to paint a picture of the bugs on the playground, details emerged. When asked, “I notice you included so many details in your picture. Can you tell me about it?” Beiwen described his picture in a detailed story about the bug.





which should be directed to the same purposes as education; society and the public authorities shall endeavor to promote the enjoyment of this right;" UN (1959). Declaration of the Rights of the Child, Article 7, Paragraph 3. United Nations.

Analysis of early play behaviors common with young children began with Darwin's Baby Diaries of the mid-19th century. A myriad of other studies focusing on play behaviors followed (Frost et al., 2012). Froebel and Pestalozzi, each in their time and place, found children's playful behaviors as productive and useful, not idle or meaningless. Montessori structured whole environments around the playful engagements she observed children initiating through spontaneous activity. Piaget founded whole structures of knowledge about ages and stages of childhood, framing cognitive development theory around the playful antics of his three children: Jacqueline, Lucienne and Laurent.

More recently, some theorists of playful learning focus on adult interactions, such as Walter Drew and companions in the Institute for Self Active Education (<https://isaeplay.org/play-training/>) (Bush et al., 2013). Conversely, Mitch Resnick and the researchers with him in the MIT Media Lab known as Lifelong Kindergarten (<https://www.media.mit.edu/groups/lifelong-kindergarten/overview/>) utilize digital play spaces, such as Scratch to 'imagine, project, share' through coding online computer interactions (<https://scratch.mit.edu/>) (Resnick, 2017).

### Defining Play and Creativity

While many academic definitions of play exist, we utilize the framework highlighted by the research of Dr. Roberta Golinkoff and Dr. Kathy Hirsh-Pasek (2008, 2016, 2021) to understand play as organically essential to development and learning. Play is fun. Listen for laughter, and expressions of joy. Players actively engage in moving and manipulating objects, and navigating relationships, all affecting multiple domains of development (Stankovi -Ramirez & Thompson, 2018). The

meaningful purpose of play encompasses play in and of itself, void of a results-oriented, product-driven focus. Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff described play as socially interactive. Mildred Parten (1932) recognized six stages of play, really focusing on the balance between solitary and social engagement through play. Hirsh-Pasek and Golinkoff noted the purposes for play in education. The profound impact on an individual's brain development is enhanced through interaction with the social impact of cooperative play. This invokes Vygotsky's description of a social womb in the constructive learning environment (Connery et al., 2010; Penfold, 2015; Vygotsky, 1930).

Diverse perspectives of creativity across history leads to difficulty in defining creativity. Many sages and wags have talked of the creative component (Frost et al., 2012; Isbell, & Yoshizawa, 2020; Koralek, 2005; Leggett, 2017; NAEYC, 2014; Tok, 2021; Yates & Twigg, 2017). The Greeks described the MUSE as an influence on human endeavors. Ancient Hebrew texts characterize their god as a creator of humankind made in his image. Humankind was given charge to then create. The mandate was not just to procreate, but to make all things new. The renaissance of Western Europe illustrates creative potential not just in the arts but also in business and economics, industry and agriculture, and exploration of their world and beyond. Creativity spoke to all of these endeavors and adventures.

In the most watched TED Talk of all time, Sir Kenneth Robinson in 2006 spoke about how schools kill creativity. He focused on the factory model of schooling and the disconnect between that model of schooling from actual learning. Sir Kenneth demonstrated a new way to think about the creative process. Turns out this wasn't his first whack at the piñata of creativity. A decade earlier, Sir Kenneth was the chair of the national advisory committee on creativity and cultural education sponsored by the British government publishing the committee report (NACCCE, 1999). While creativity is often considered "out of the box thinking," this report outlined ways to consider creativity as normative for most people.

To contrast with a view of creativity reserved for the fine arts (what they call 'sectoral') or for the gifted or talented (what they call 'elite'), a democratic view recognizes elements of creativity throughout the general population (NACCCE, 1999, p. 28-29) with four components to categorize expression of creativity. The first component of creativity consists of imagination. Every person has access to imagination, as well as a potential for imagination being taught and cultivated. Imagination sparks from many good sources, primarily language and encounters in literature. Another component describes creativity as purposeful. The old saying 'necessity is the mother of invention' comes to mind. Creativity is used by many people in many cultures to solve problems. The third component of creativity is originality. While considering an act original if never before seen, instances of originality occur when first introduced into a group or culture, or even the first time an individual experiences it. The fourth component of creativity involves participation in judging value and appreciating preferences refined through discipline and experience.

While trained and gifted artists wonderfully and blissfully explore

the creative arts, the accessibility of creative arts to all emerges from a democratic view of creativity (NACCCE, 1999). The following sections provide tools for building creativity through play across the creative arts including dramatic play, movement and dance, music, and visual arts. Additionally, play and creativity as a tool for creating the self delve into social and emotional learning, social constructivism, and the spiritual life of children.

## Building a Toolbox for Creative Arts in Early Childhood Classrooms

Early childhood is a time of great creativity. Building creativity into the learning environment should be natural, organic, as observant teachers follow the child. Here are steps to build a toolbox for creative arts in early childhood classrooms and how they become tools for creating self (Table 2).

Children engage in symbolic representation as they move from “objects as objects” to “objects of their imagination” (Table 3). Providing open-ended opportunities for imagination helps promote creativity in dramatic play. Exploring the sounds of language, and the humor in jokes and riddles, are creative forms of play. The natural environment contains many items to interest young children. Prompting children to create miniature ‘fairy’ gardens invites prolonged engagement with imaginative dramatic play with naturally found objects.

### Movement and Dance as a Tool for Play and Creativity

Opportunities for children to explore the body in space develops proprioception, the awareness of the body in space (Table 4) (Carlson, 2011; Huber, 2015; Keeler, 2020). Children learn through experiences with movement and play. Simple songs exploring body parts begin this process (e.g., “Open, Shut

Them”, “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes”). Movements to dramatize lessons (skits, represent science/life cycles, etc.) increase learning outcomes. Jean Piaget emphasized “concrete operations”- the need for children to learn through physical engagement (Frost et al., 2012). Integrating movement opportunities into the curriculum enhances learning and development across the learning domains. Engaging, joyful movement opportunities build motor skills and motivate children for physical activity across the lifespan.

**Table 2 Tools for creating self through the arts**

Tools for Creating Self	Learning and Development
<b>Dramatic Play</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language arts: Reading, writing, speaking, listening</li> <li>• Poems, songs, nursery rhymes</li> <li>• Jokes &amp; riddles</li> <li>• Open-ended opportunities for imagination               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• e.g., dress up, miniature ‘fairy’ gardens with natural objects</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Nurturing throughout all domains: physical, language, aesthetic, cognitive, emotional, and social <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creativity</li> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Motor skills</li> <li>• Motivation for physical activity</li> <li>• Conflict resolution</li> <li>• Social-emotional growth</li> <li>• Cognitive growth</li> <li>• Collaboration skills</li> <li>• Problem solving skills</li> <li>• Subject area learning standards</li> <li>• Perspectives and understanding the world around them</li> <li>• Democracy amid a culturally diverse society</li> </ul>
<b>Movement &amp; Dance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Simple songs to explore body parts, like “Open, Shut Them” or “Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes.”</li> <li>• Movement to dramatize lessons, like skits, represent science/life cycles</li> </ul>	
<b>Music</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Poems, songs, nursery rhymes</li> <li>• Rhythm and meter exploring the elemental components of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and timbre)</li> </ul>	
<b>Visual Arts</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Drawing, painting, sculpting with clay and mud, collage</li> </ul>	

**Table 3 Imagination at the Block Center**

The block center provided ample opportunities for manipulating and moving objects. After stacking and building enclosures, 15-month-old Kiara engaged with Abu in a repetitive series of motions and interactions that seemed orderly, but their meaning eluded the caregivers observing them. Finally, Kiara picked up a block, held it to her ear, and said “Hawoo.” She was playing like the block was her phone. The shift from playing with “objects as objects” to becoming “objects of imagination” demonstrated a new level of symbolic representation.

**Table 4 Exploring the environment through movement**

A mobile infant, Dharma is playing on the rug with a toy. He looks up distracted by his teacher’s voice. She is across the rug talking to another child. He looks back at the toy in his grasp when something else catches his attention. The baby puts down the toy and transitions from sitting to crawling position and begins to move closer to this object. He reaches for it. Once in the baby’s grasp, he explores by feeling the object with his hands and moving his arms up and down watching the toy. As should be expected, Dharma explores the object by mouthing it.

### Music as a Tool for Play and Creativity

The Suzuki Method of music instruction involves child-centered approaches that fosters whole child learning and development (Table 5) (Suzuki 1969). The underlying principle signifies the potential for anyone to be a musician with the right learning experiences including:

- Providing a nurturing and positive environment through involvement of teachers, parents, and other learners
- Engaging children in rich musical experiences that scaffold learning by:
  - First, listening to music to understand the rhythm and patterns in the pieces;
  - Next, learning about the musical instrument through exploration;
  - Then, focusing on hearing and imitating sounds; and
  - Finally, learning to read music.

**Table 5 Learning to play music through exploration**

Shinichi Suzuki (1898-1998) grew up next to his father's violin factory in Nagoya, Japan. His early experiences with violins and music laid the foundation for his success as a musician. After hearing Schubert's Ave Maria, he brought home a violin from his father's factory. By listening to songs and imitating the violist, he constructed his own understanding of how to play the violin. This occurred through an initial focus on studying sounds instead of reading music notes. He began teaching children with the same method which aligns with evidence-based teaching and developmentally appropriate practices.

**Table 6 Exploration of visual art: four vignettes**

**First marks on paper:** Abbie holds a crayon in a palmar to grasp the crayon and move it around. As she moves her hand up and down, the crayon marks on the paper sparks amazement from the child.

**The art shelf in Pre-Kindergarten:** The art center was the focal point of a three-year-old classroom in a Reggio-inspired public school in the Midwest (Krechevsky et al., 2013). Shelves were filled with a variety of art mediums and supports, or surfaces to compose and construct art. Mediums included clay, acrylic paints, markers, charcoal and watercolor pencils, chalk, oil pastels, Collage materials, scraps of different types of paper, natural materials, wire, beads, scissors, glue, and even glitter also filled the shelves. The beginning of the year sometimes felt daunting and laborious as expectations, routines, and procedures were practiced. However, instead of teaching children explicit expectations for many routines and procedures, children learned how to use art mediums through exploration. For example, children figured out the right amount of glue for different materials through trial and error. Providing trays to enable children to explore and guiding children in cleaning up the area when finished turned "errors" into teachable moments. Children not only felt a sense of confidence, but also felt a sense of independence in getting out supplies, choosing a project, and putting unused supplies back.

**Kindergarten painting easel:** The easel in the kindergarten contained primary colors of acrylic paint, blue, yellow, and red, while black, white and brown paint were available on the side shelf. Children experimented with color by mixing combinations of the paint colors until the desired hue was created. This initiated many in-depth conversations about color theory.

**Modeling with clay:** After initial explorations in texture and form with clay, PK students begin modeling the classroom pets. Woody, a guinea pig, and Rosie, a Flemish giant rabbit began as shapeless balls of clay and monochromatic circles of paint. Midyear, the abstract depictions of the classroom pets transitioned into representational, or naturalists, designs including detailed, polychromatic paintings and sculptures.

Music entails an artistic experience present across the globe. Sharing poems, songs, and nursery rhymes creates a common culture, a canon of childhood that writes cultural values deep within the young child's soul. Utilizing rhythm and meter to explore the contrast of duple meter (e.g. "Mary Had a Little Lamb") to triple meter (e.g. "The More We Get Together!") accentuates how the elemental components of music (rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and timbre) enhance a classroom community as they manage their playlist of favorite songs.

### Visual Art as a Tool for Play and Creativity

Exploring the visual arts afford children the opportunity to utilize their creativity (Table 6). Drawing and painting, sculpting with clay and mud, emphasizes a process orientation rather than a product mind-set. John Dewey expressed the value in art as an integral part of teaching and learning: "Art is the most effective mode of communication that exists" (1934, p. 286). Dewey views art as an instrumental tool for children to communicate their perspectives and understandings of the world around them (Mattern, 1999). On the other hand, providing children opportunities to explore a variety of art from different cultures and from different places increases children's understanding of democracy amid a culturally diverse society.

### Play and Creativity as a Tool for Creating Self

The organic nature of play in children negates a need to script a child's play. Simply providing creative opportunities and materials enables creating the self through play. The following three sections describe tools for creating self through play and creativity: Social emotional learning, social constructivism, and the spiritual life of children.

### Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Social and emotional learning (SEL) begins at birth and continues throughout a person's lifespan (Table 7). Social smiling and laughter begin in infancy including early signs of empathy arising as infants mirror caregiver's tone and expressions. Ashiabi (2007) characterizes the social side of development in how children interact with peers and build



friendships, whereas how children respond to peers and situations as the emotional side of development. Providing opportunities for play nurtures learning physically, socially, affectively, and cognitively in conflict resolution, social-emotional growth, cognitive growth, collaboration skills, problem solving skills, and content subject-area learning standards.

Children’s social experiences are full of emotions. As children engage in new experiences and begin to build peer relationships, children learn the strategies to respond to these emotions. Supported by a multitude of pedagogical theories, children gain many social and emotional skills through play. Children can be more successful in this informal, natural and relaxed state. Piaget (1951, 1995) believed children gained perspective-taking abilities through peer play. Erikson (1982) asserted make believe play is a means to understand cultural and societal expectations and norms.

Social play progresses through a four-step process. Initially, children engage in nonsocial activity or solitary play. Then, children transition to parallel play and begin to use the same materials but may not interact. Children then advance to associative play conversing and sharing materials while involved in separate activities. Finally, children engage in cooperative play or group play participating in a shared play scheme.

### Social Constructivism

From a deep understanding of the psychology of development, Vygotsky (1930; Connery et al., 2010; Penfold, 2015) added a fundamentally social component to his observations and speculations on the development of children. His view of creativity and imagination resides in a collective creativity with children’s actions appearing independent and autonomous, actually being



collaborative and collective within the sphere of immediate context and through larger cultural influences. Language serves as a predominant vehicle for cultural induction (**Table 8**). Cultural icons that include art, music, dance, and theater enable the child to become a native of her mother tongue.

The fundamental codes of a culture - those governing its language, its schemas of perception, its exchanges, its techniques, its values, the hierarchy of its practices - establish for every man, from the very first, the empirical orders with which he will be dealing and within which he will be at home. (Foucault, 1970, p. xx)

This social constructivism connects multiple strands of development into the creative act. The child, acting on his environment, driven through internal mechanisms of attachment and meaning making, creates for herself a soul, a being made in the image of her culture. Yet, one of a kind, unique in all historic time and creation.

Play is understood as a creative act that reconstructs, appropriates and transforms human experience to produce new realities. Imaginative play is presented as an integral part of experiencing the world from new and multiple perspectives (Penfold, 2015).

**Table 7 Understanding feelings and emotions through books**

When he was about 18 months old, Jawdat was used to reading together with his family. Books were friends, just like people and pets. One busy play day, a sudden noise startled the toddler. When his father scooped up the toddler and soothed his tears, the child pointed to the library shelf. Daddy thought it was to read a book to comfort and calm. No, not that book, not that one either. Finally, Jawdat found the book he was looking for, a favorite he had read many times - *Where’s the Green Sheep* by Mem Fox (2004). Daddy settled down to read it, opening the cover to the first page. No, not that page, Jawdat flipped through until he found the page he wanted. The picture showed a sheep standing atop a high diving board. Daddy read “Where’s the scared sheep?” The pre-verbal toddler didn’t know the word ‘scared’ but he knew the feeling! And he knew where to find it in one of his favorite books.

**Table 8 Language acquisition through exploration with others**

Oliver was born into a busy household, with two big sisters and a mom and dad. The first months included much growth and many milestones. He was making all the usual oohs and coos, babbling along with sounds of his home, his native language, his mother tongue. Around five months, the family was gathered, playing together, lots of laughing. Suddenly they stopped, suspecting something different was going on in their baby’s noise making. He stopped. They started talking, laughing, carrying on, and the infant became active again, making noise like them. When they stopped, he stopped. This repartee went on and on for quite a while. This child was working on language based in the context of playing together within those relationships most significant to him.



### Spiritual Life of Children

All creative work through play informs the whole child's development, from physical and language, aesthetic and cognitive, emotional and social (ASCD, 2021; Cooper, 2013). An even greater development of creativity and play within the community of family and the school occurs within what some perceive to be the life of the spirit. Aline Wolf, a Montessori author and publisher (1996), wrote on the role of nurturing the spirit in the work of early educators.

Our task as spiritual nurturers becomes easier when we realize that we do not have to instill spirituality in a child, we have only to protect it from being trampled and to nourish its natural growth (p. 29).

She followed Montessori's design in teacher preparation, promoting the act of teaching as a transformative act bringing life to the teacher lessons brought content to the children. This interaction of spirit with the social life of the classroom brings the aesthetic sense to the forefront.

### Living a Creative Life in the Company of Young Children

Play and creativity enhance learning and development across the domains supporting the whole child. The benefits of play and creativity move in waves across the lifespan even into adulthood (Thompson & Stankovi-Ramirez, 2021). In a world that is ever changing and often unpredictable, play and creativity enhance skill sets necessary for success inside and outside of the classroom in the present and the future. Through play and creativity, children build perspectives and understanding of the world around them to navigate democratically amid a culturally diverse society. Hence, teachers of young children should both offer and engage in opportunities for play and creativity.

- What drew you into spending a life with young children?
- How has your life changed by keeping company with playful, creative young children?

We are caregivers, and children need care for so many aspects of their busy lives. And yet, the work of creating their selves, the internal construction of who they are, is their work alone. We are privileged to have a toddler who recognizes us, a kindergartener who shares their latest joke, or an elementary child who keeps us up to date on their reading list. Such creative work of childhood isn't reserved for children. Lucky us, we get to experience childlike wonder and love of learning throughout our lives. Even better, we are invited to live our creative life in the company of young children.

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# What is Play Therapy

Dee C. Ray



Play therapy is a developmentally appropriate, play-based mental health intervention for young children who are experiencing social, emotional, behavioral and relational disorders. Play therapy utilizes play, the natural language of children, and therapeutic relationship to provide a safe, consistent therapeutic environment in which a child can experience full acceptance, empathy, and understanding from the therapist and process inner experiences and feelings through play and symbols. A child's experience within the counseling relationship is the factor that is most healing and meaningful in creating lasting, positive change.

Play therapy has been shown to be effective with minor to severe emotional and behavioral problems, including disruptive behaviors, anxiety, depression, trauma symptoms, and a myriad of other issues. Research also demonstrates that play therapy is effective in building parent-child relationships, reducing parenting stress, and increasing a child's self-concept, expanding its usefulness to children experiencing typical developmental and family stressors.

## How Does Play Therapy Work?

Infants and young children lack the verbal ability to communicate through words, relying on play and behaviors for learning

and expression. Even if a child has a strong vocabulary and ability to talk, they often struggle with expressing their feelings clearly or explaining why they do the things they do. In play therapy, a child is able to express themselves in their developmentally appropriate language of play, often using toys as words rather than talking. The child expresses themselves more clearly and the therapist is skillful and attuned to listening in the language of play. This leads to less frustration for a child when they try to explain or understand themselves.

A second way that play therapy helps is that the play therapist facilitates the development of skills in children such as appropriate expression of feelings, learning to regulate their feelings and behaviors, following limits, increasing empathy, and taking responsibility. The third way that play therapy can help is that the play therapist works with parents to help them develop greater understanding of their child's needs and motivations, as well as help parents develop skills to respond to their children in ways that will develop the parent-child relationship and the child's wellness.

Individual and group play therapy is typically offered to children starting at the age of three. For children younger than three years old, play therapists often work with parents to develop skills in order to conduct play sessions with their children. The goal of these sessions is to help parents build positive relationships with their children through the language of play, while also preventing potential behavioral or emotional problems. Many play therapists teach parents how to adapt play skills to use with infants, as well as older children.

## How to Find a Play Therapist?

Registered Play Therapists are credentialed therapists who have met both education and experience requirements to ensure that they are competent in play therapy. The Association for Play Therapy ([a4pt.org](http://a4pt.org)) offers a listing of Registered Play Therapists from across the United States and many other countries.

**Dee C. Ray, Ph.D., LPC-S, NCC, RPT-S** is Distinguished Teaching Professor and Elaine Millikan Mathes Professor in Early Childhood Education in the Counseling Program and Director of the Center for Play Therapy at the University of North Texas. Dr. Ray has published over 150 articles, chapters, and books, specializing in research specifically examining the process and effects of Child Centered Play Therapy in schools. She served as board member for the Association for Child and Adolescent Counseling and Association for Play Therapy, founding editor of the *Journal of Child and Adolescent Counseling*, and an American Counseling Association Fellow.

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# Children's Book Review



## *The Most Magnificent Thing*

By Dina Costa Treff

Ashley Spires's *The Most Magnificent Thing* is a book about a regular girl who sets out to make something magnificent with her best friend, her dog. The girl and her dog do everything together including racing, eating, exploring, relaxing, etc. One day the girl decides she wants to make something. She knew just how she wants it to look. She comes up with a plan, sketching out the details. She and the dog gather supplies and set up to create this magnificent thing. She worked, hammered, and measured. When finished, the girl was not pleased with the thing she built. So, she worked on making another thing. Again, it was not what she had envisioned. After several attempts and minor tweaks and additions, the girl grew frustrated. In her moment of anger, she jams, smashes, and pummels the pieces together. Then comes a crunch of her finger. This made the girl quite sad, and she declared that she is not good at this and quits. Her dog distracts her with a walk and when they return, she discovers that her neighbors have found many uses for all the items she created while trying to create her most magnificent thing. Then she sees it, the thing that will be so magnificent.

*The Magnificent Thing* demonstrates that even with frustration, you should never give up, always keep working, and you will stumble across your most magnificent thing. *The Most Magnificent Thing* is great for children from 3 to 7 years old.



*The Most Magnificent Thing* de Ashley Spires es un libro sobre una niña que se propone hacer algo magnífico con su mejor amiga, su perro. La niña y su perro hacen todo juntos, incluyendo correr, comer, explorar, relajarse, etc. Un día la pequeña decide que quiere hacer algo. Ella sabía cómo quería que se viera. Se le ocurre un plan, esbozando los detalles. Ella y el perro reúnen suministros y se preparan para crear esta magnífica cosa. Trabajaba, martillaba y medía. Cuando terminó, la niña no estaba contenta con lo que construyó. Entonces, ella trabajó en hacer otra cosa. Una vez más, no era lo que ella había imaginado. Después de varios intentos y pequeños ajustes y

añadidas, la niña se frustró. En un momento de ira, ella, rompe y golpea todo las piezas que había construido. Luego vino un crujido de su dedo. Esto la puso bastante triste y declaró que no era buena haciendo eso y desistió. Su perro la distrae con un paseo y cuando regresan, descubre que sus vecinos han encontrado muchos usos para todos los artículos que ella creó mientras intentaba crear algo muy especial. Es entonces que ella lo ve, lo que será tan magnífico. *The Magnificent Thing* demuestra que incluso con frustración, nunca debes rendirte, siempre seguir trabajando, y vas a ver lo tan magnífico que tu has creado. *The Most Magnificent Thing* es ideal para niños de 3 a 7 años.

**Dina Costa Treff** is the lead preschool teacher in the Child Development Lab preschool program at University of Georgia.



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