Fostering inclusive learning through bilingual drama-based storytime and UDL for young emergent multilinguals with disabilities

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Abstract: This study explores how drama-based storytime lesson activities in two dual-language bilingual education (DLBE) developmental preschool classrooms serving emergent multilinguals with disabilities (EMwDs) align with Universal Design for Learning (UDL) principles. Traditional, one-size-fits-all educational practices often create barriers for diverse learners, including young EMwDs, by designing lessons for an "average" student. Drama-Based Pedagogy (DBP), which integrates drama strategies into academic instruction, has been shown to support young children's language, literacy, and socioemotional development, particularly in early childhood settings. Similarly, UDL focuses on removing barriers to learning by designing instruction that accounts for learner variability through three key principles: representation, engagement, and action and expression. We argue that DBP and UDL offer complementary approaches that embrace learner diversity and promote inclusive, responsive, and accessible learning environments. This study was conducted as part of a larger professional development program designed to prepare early childhood teachers to integrate drama strategies into literacy instruction in DLBE classrooms. We analyzed drama-based storytime activities led by a drama teaching artist and a preschool educator in morning and afternoon developmental preschool DLBE classrooms, serving ten EMwDs. Using Vosaic software, we deductively analyzed 18 videotaped drama lessons. Findings revealed that drama-based storytime lessons align with UDL's principles of representation, engagement, and action and expression, while also creating unique opportunities for EMwDs to have their abilities recognized and to actively participate through multiple modalities in English and Spanish storytime lessons.

Introduction

One-size-fits-all educational practices design learning activities for an "average" student and create barriers to learning for many students, including young emergent multilinguals with disabilities (EMwDs: We use the term "emergent multilinguals with disabilities" to (1) acknowledge the cultural and linguistic knowledge that students already bring across different language forms, including verbal and sign languages, and (2) draw attention to the socially constructed nature of disability). To address these barriers, bilingual drama-based pedagogy (DBP) and universal design for learning (UDL) offer complementary approaches that embrace learner variability and foster inclusive, responsive, and accessible learning environments for all learners. Although Glass et al. (2013) called for research on the intersections of the arts, including DBP, and UDL to support all learners, no studies have empirically examined these connections yet. Therefore, in this study, we examine how drama-based storytime lesson activities conducted in two dual language bilingual education (DLBE) developmental preschool classrooms align with UDL principles.

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Universal Design for Learning

UDL is grounded in neuroscience and existing research, such as disability studies, inclusive education, and culturally sustaining education (Center for Applied Special Technology [CAST], 2018; 2024). It aims to dismantle barriers to learning, such as curricular, environmental, and attitudinal, by intentionally designing curricula that consider learner variability and needs from the start (Waitoller & King Thorious, 2016). Crucially, the UDL 3.0 guidelines, developed by CAST (2024), aim to put UDL in conversation with other asset-based pedagogies by emphasizing learner identity as an aspect of learner variability and recognizing bias as a barrier to learning (Tucker-Smith, 2023). This is especially salient for young EMwDs, whose disability and language-related identities must be honored and sustained through instructional practices. Three UDL principles—multiple means of representation, engagement, and action and expression—guide the design and implementation of flexible curriculum objectives, methods, and assessments.

Multiple means of representation target the "what" of learning by ensuring students have multiple options to perceive, comprehend, and understand the content, focusing on 12 key considerations (CAST, 2024). This principle takes as its premise that all learners take in information differently. By targeting the "recognition" brain network (Glass et al., 2013), the principle of multiple means of representation involves presenting information in a variety of multisensory means and formats (CAST, 2024; Haley-Mize & Reeves, 2013). The guidelines for the principle of multiple means of representation include providing: (a) "flexible content that offers multiple modalities and perspectives," such as using props and manipulatives, pairing visuals with verbal instructions, and offering large-print or oversized books (CAST, 2024; Fundelius et al., 2023; Gauvreau et al., 2019, 2023; Haley-Mize & Reeves, 2013); (b) multiple options for "language and symbols," such as pre-teaching key vocabulary and incorporating translanguaging; and (c) multiple ways for learners to "construct meaning and generate new understandings," such as connecting instruction with prior knowledge and incorporating multiple ways of knowing (CAST, 2024).

Multiple means of engagement address the "why" of learning by considering the varied ways learners become interested and stay engaged in a lesson, targeting the brain's affective network (CAST, 2024; Gauvreau et al., 2023; Lohmann et al., 2023). Focusing on 13 key considerations, it includes: (a) "welcoming students' identities and interests," such as offering choices and using culturally and linguistically responsive instructional materials (CAST, 2024; Donegan-Ritter, 2017; Gauvreau et al., 2023; Lohmann et al., 2018); (b) providing options to support "sustaining effort and persistence," such as fostering collaboration and belonging; and (c) designing options for "emotional capacity," such as cultivating empathy (CAST, 2024). The updated 3.0 considerations of "optimiz[ing] relevance, value, and authenticity," "nurtur[ing] joy and play," address[ing] bias, threats, and distractions," and "foster[ing] collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning"—are especially relevant for young EMwDs as they support responding to and sustaining their language- and disability-related identities in classroom settings.

Finally, multiple means of action and expression target the "how" of learning by providing options for students to demonstrate their knowledge, focusing on 11 key considerations related to the "strategic learning network" (CAST, 2024; Glass et al., 2013). It includes designing: (a) "options for interaction," such as allowing students multiple ways to demonstrate their understanding (e.g., physical, verbal, pointing); (b) "options for expression and communication," such as using various media to express knowledge (e.g., drawing, movement, video) without hierarchy or bias; and (c) "options for strategy development," such as setting meaningful goals (CAST, 2024).

Previous Research on UDL

We conducted a literature review to explore how UDL has been used and described in early childhood and elementary years and identified six empirical articles (Craig et al., 2022; Katz, 2013; Lieber et al., 2008; Mavrou et al., 2013; Ostrosky et al., 2024; Smith Canter et al., 2017) and one systematic literature review (Ewe & Galvin, 2023).

Ewe and Galvin's (2023) systematic review of empirical UDL studies conducted in Europe focused

on school-age children, revealing positive improvements in the learning process, including increased motivation and engagement, improved student attitudes toward specific subject areas, and enhanced learning outcomes. Intervention studies based on UDL (Katz, 2013; Lieber et al., 2008; Ostrosky et al., 2024; Mavrou et al., 2013) also demonstrated significant positive learning outcomes. These gains included significant improvements in literacy (e.g., rhyming, letter-word identification, emergent writing, and picture naming), as well as in math and social skills (Lieber et al., 2008), active engagement, motor skills (e.g., jumping, kicking, and throwing), and social development (Ostrosky et al., 2024), and active student engagement (Katz, 2013). Additionally, Mavrou et al. (2013) found that early learners aged 3.5 to 5 generated more questions when provided with both symbols and words compared to words alone, indicating that multiple means of representation (i.e., words and pictures) were beneficial to young learners in developing their ability to generate questions.

Two studies (Craig et al., 2022; Smith Canter et al., 2017) designed professional development (PD) programs on UDL for K-12 teachers. The results indicated that teachers increased their use of technology and implementation of UDL practices. Additionally, teachers in the PD programs reported feeling more successful in designing accessible lessons for diverse students.

In conclusion, while there are few empirical studies on Universal Design for Learning (UDL)'s effectiveness across grade levels, no empirical research to date has examined its connection to drama-based instruction. Among these empirical studies, students with disabilities were included as participants (e.g., Mavrou et al., 2013), but no study included multilingual learners. This may be due in part to the siloed approach to educating EMLWDs, which often focuses on *either* disability *or* language-related needs. This study aims to contribute to this limited field of research by examining how drama-based storytime aligns with UDL principles.

Drama-based Pedagogy

Drama-based Pedagogy (DBP) involves integrating drama strategies into academic areas. Through improvisation, imagination, movement, and physical embodiment, learners engage in drama-based activities to bring the curriculum to life in the classroom. Crucially, DBP brings together the mind and the body through "active and dramatic approaches" (Dawson & Lee, 2018, p. 17) to support "academic, affective, and aesthetic learning" (p. 21). DBP is process-oriented rather than product-oriented and works toward social or academic goals for students.

Dawson and Lee (2018) identified characteristics of DBP, including (1) ensemble, or a community where learners feel belonging and acceptance; (2) imagination, or opportunities for students to explore new perspectives and opinions; (3) embodiment, or movement of the body to explore "new or imagined viewpoints" (p. 20); and (4) a narrative, or an opportunity for the teacher to structure these imaginative activities.

Previous Literature on Drama-based Pedagogy

The previous literature reveals the effectiveness of DBP on students' learning (e.g., Kilinc et al., 2023; Lee et al., 2015). Lee et al.'s (2015) meta-analysis encompassing 47 studies testing the effectiveness of DBP from 1985-2012 demonstrated DBP to be a broadly effective strategy for learners across age ranges, as a positive effect was shown across measures including 21st-century skills, attitudes toward the subject matter, attitudes toward others, motivation, drama skills, and absenteeism. Although all age ranges were included in the meta-synthesis, Lee et al. (2015) emphasize that a greater effect was found on early childhood and lower elementary-aged students. Studies specific to early childhood and primary grades emphasize academic benefits of DBP, particularly in the areas of literacy (Bernstein et al., 2024; Bucholz, 2015; Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2023; van Huisstede et al., 2024), understanding of science concepts (Andersen, 2004; Walan & Enochsson, 2019), and foreign language acquisition (Mede & Vardar, 2021).

DBP has also demonstrated a positive impact on students' literacy learning, such as comprehension, vocabulary, and embodied behavior at story retelling (Bernstein et al., 2024; Deeg et al., 2020; Kilinc et al., 2017; van Huisstede et al., 2024). For example, Bernstein et al. (2024) found that preschoolers in the drama-

based storytime demonstrated twice as many embodied behaviors during story retelling, contributing to greater story comprehension as they recalled more story elements, compared to preschoolers in the typical storytime group. Similarly, DBP has been shown to enhance vocabulary development (Deeg et al., 2020; Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2017; Mede & Vardar, 2021; Podlozny, 2000). For example, van Huisstede et al. (2024) found that DBP enhanced preschoolers' ability to recall vocabulary related to character emotions compared to the control group, attributing this improvement to the embodiment of these emotion words. These vocabulary gains may be in part because of the language-rich nature of drama contexts in which vocabulary is used in authentic contexts (Karaolis, 2023).

DBP has been shown to enhance early learners' science knowledge (Andersen, 2004; Walan & Enochsson, 2019). Walan and Enochsson (2019) used a pre-posttest design to analyze preschoolers' understanding of how the common cold is transmitted. While the students demonstrated varying degrees of understanding following the story without drama, they were more able to name vocabulary related to immune cells following the story with drama, as measured by drawings and interviews. Andersen (2004) utilized a DBP and Inquiry approach in which students role-played as scientists, finding that those using these strategies were significantly more able to label snail anatomy and describe proper snail care. Andersen (2004) attributes these gains to the situated learning provided by the DBP through its use of "as-if worlds."

DBP has also been shown to have non-academic impacts on early learners, including increasing problem-solving skills (Kayılı & Erdal, 2021), emotional development (Gao et al., 2022), and social inclusion (Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2017; Mede & Vardar, 2021). For example, young learners in Kayılı and Erdal's (2021) study showed moderate gains in problem-solving ability with drama storytelling compared to non-DBP problem-solving instruction. Gao et al. (2022) found that DBP enhanced preschoolers' emotion management, social engagement, and confidence in their social interaction. Additionally, several studies highlighted how DBP creates engaging, playful contexts for young learners to interact with academic contexts (Bucholz, 2015; Karaolis, 2023; Mages, 2018; Mede & Vardar, 2021). These socioemotional benefits, taken with the academic benefits, position DBP as a valuable addition to the early childhood classroom.

Finally, DBP has been demonstrated to be a powerful tool for furthering inclusive practices (Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2016; 2017) and allowing all students, particularly those who have been labeled with disability, to position themselves as capable and competent. Robinson (2013) found that only DBP was demonstrated to have positive academic and linguistic outcomes for students with disability labels. DBP demonstrated the importance of embodiment in providing students who do not always succeed in traditional (i.e., written or spoken) measures of competence with alternative means to participate (Bernstein et al., 2024; Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2016; 2017). Kilinc et al. (2017) theorizes this may be due to the open-ended and embodied nature of the DBP instruction, in which there is no "right" answer, and students are free to demonstrate their learning through movement, words, or a combination of both. Crucially, when students are allowed this freedom in the ways they engage in the learning context, both students (Karaolis, 2023; Kilinc et al., 2017) and teachers (Kilinc et al., 2016) see competence in both themselves and each other.

Glass et al. (2013) argue that drama and UDL are natural partners, as both take learner variability as their premise. UDL can enhance DBP by promoting inclusivity and accessibility through thoughtful planning, while DBP inherently incorporates key UDL principles, such as physical expression (Glass et al., 2013). For example, DBP focuses on ensemble building, including various drama activities, such as warm-ups, circle exercises, drama games, and improvisation activities, to build community, facilitate collaboration, recruit interest, and enhance engagement (Glass et al., 2013). However, no empirical studies were found in our review to show how DBP and UDL align and contribute to each other. Exploring the intersection of DBP and UDL is important, as both approaches can address the needs of diverse learners, including those with and without disabilities. DBP offers an embodied, imaginative, and interactive learning experience that can enhance the accessibility of lessons when intentionally designed with UDL principles. At the same time, UDL can benefit from DBP activities, as they can offer specific strategies to implement UDL principles in practice. Together, these approaches can foster more inclusive, responsive,

and engaging learning environments for all children. The current study contributes to the growing body of qualitative research on DBP in early childhood contexts and empirical research utilizing UDL, aiming to expand the theorization of DBP to include explicit connections to UDL, thereby demonstrating its value when used with a wide range of learners. The following research question guided us: "How do drama-based storytime lesson activities conducted in two dual language bilingual education developmental preschool classrooms align with Universal Design for Learning principles?"

Method

Early Years Educators at Play (EYEPlay) Dual Language (Spanish/English) Learning Professional Development Program

The Early Years Educators at Play (EYEPlay) Dual Language (Spanish/English) Learning (DLL) Professional Development (PD) Program aimed to prepare preschool teachers to integrate drama strategies into their bilingual literacy contexts over a year. A professional theatre teaching artist (TA) knowledgeable in drama was paired with a preschool teacher. Using an apprenticeship model, the TA first modeled a lesson ("I do"), then co-taught a lesson with the preschool teacher ("we do"), and finally, the preschool teacher taught a lesson independently ("you do"); this process was part of a drama unit (Rogoff, 1995; 2003). The language of instruction alternated with each lesson. For example, if a model lesson was implemented in English, the team lesson was conducted in Spanish.

Each drama unit also included an in-service session during which all participating preschool teachers were taught the targeted drama strategy and collaborated with their TAs to plan the team lesson. After the team lesson, the TA and preschool teachers held a planning meeting to prepare for the solo lesson. Following the solo lesson, the TA and preschool teachers had a reflection session to discuss the drama lesson, focusing on the overall implementation, student participation, and responses.

Five drama units were completed over the year, each lasting one to two months. Each unit focused on a primary drama strategy: pantomime, traveling pantomime, magic bag, teacher in role, and group story building. These drama strategies were paired with language objectives (e.g., receptive and expressive language), curricular goals (e.g., problem-solving), or Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) instructional support dimensions (e.g., language modeling and concept development). In particular, the pairings were as follows: Unit 1) pantomime and language modeling; Unit 2) magic bag and concept development; Unit 3) teacher in role and expressive language; Unit 4) traveling pantomime and teacher in role with language modeling; and Unit 5) group story building and problem-solving.

Overall, 26 preschool educators participated in the larger professional development program, including 13 classroom preschool teachers and their 13 paraprofessionals. The study was approved by the Institutional Review Board. We obtained written consent from teachers, TAs, paraprofessionals, and parents for the children's participation and for videotaping the drama lessons. At the start of the activities, the TAs and researchers introduced themselves to the children in an age-appropriate manner. For example, in the classrooms described below, the TA and researchers shared their names and explained that the TA would be doing drama activities with the children, while the researcher would be watching and taking videos to learn more about what they were doing. The researcher also asked the children if it was okay for her to observe and record. No children refused to participate in the drama activities for the study below. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms were used for all participants, and all data were stored on a password-protected external hard drive.

Setting

As part of the larger EYEPlay DLL PD program, this study was conducted in two developmental preschool (developmental preschool serves children who are eligible for early intervention or special education services) DLBE classrooms, specifically the morning and afternoon classrooms, serving EMwDs in an urban public elementary school district in the Southwestern United States. These classrooms were selected because they served emergent multilingual preschool students with developmental delays and

were part of the larger EYEPlay study. The same preschool teacher and paraprofessionals taught in both classes. The classrooms followed a 50/50 Spanish-English DLBE model, alternating the language of instruction each day.

Participants

One English-Spanish bilingual early childhood special education lead teacher (Sofia-all names are pseudonyms) was sampled in this PD program, while two paraprofessionals (Rebecca and Elena) participated in the drama activities in the classroom. Sofia was a first-year DLBE early childhood special education teacher in her early twenties with no training in DBP. She self-identified as Latina, speaking Spanish as a first language. Rebecca was a paraprofessional in her early fifties with 17 years of experience working with students with disabilities. She self-identified as a mixed-race female. She did not have any formal training in teaching. Elena was also a paraprofessional in her mid-fifties with 15 years of experience. She identified herself as a Hispanic immigrant who spoke Spanish as a first language. She held a high school degree without any formal training in teaching. None of the teachers had a background in DBP or UDL.

Additionally, one TA (Martha), who self-identified as white, was bilingual in Spanish and English, and had eight years of experience teaching drama, participated in this study. She did not have a formal teacher education degree.

Ten culturally-, linguistically-, and ability-diverse students eligible for special education services participated in this study with parental consent. There were six children in the morning and four in the afternoon. Two students were female, and eight were male. Their race and ethnicity were reported as Hispanic or Latino (n = 6), White (n = 3), and Native American (i.e., Navajo) (n = 1). The students' primary languages were reported as English (n = 6), Spanish (n = 3), and English and Spanish (n = 1). Students' age ranges were 4.0 to 4.8 (n = 5) and 3.0 to 3.8 (n = 5). All students had developmental delay labels and were eligible for free and reduced lunch.

Data Collection

The first author videotaped 18 drama lessons throughout the year using a flip cam and a tripod. During the videotaping, the first author did not participate in the drama activities; instead, she stayed behind the camera as an observer to minimize disruption. To ensure high-quality recordings, the camera was positioned strategically to capture the entire activity, including teacher and student interactions. Eight lessons were conducted in Spanish, and ten lessons were conducted in English, each lasting approximately 15 to 30 minutes. Overall, the TA led five model lessons, the TA and the teacher co-taught eight team lessons, and the teacher led five solo lessons. Only three of the 18 from the first drama unit were conducted in the afternoon classroom.

Data Analysis

The transcripts of the videos were added as subtitles before the coding process began. The first author coded the 18 drama videos using a deductive approach (Creswell, 2013). UDL principles—engagement, representation, and action and expression—and their associated considerations (e.g., "nurture joy and play" and "support multiple ways to perceive information" [CAST, 2024]) were coded whenever a specific part of the video or section aligned with them. For instance, the drama song was coded as: "Drama songs: Engagement—welcoming interests and identities; nurture joy and play." In some cases, a specific activity was aligned with multiple UDL principles. For example, songs used to represent content were coded under both "UDL Representation—design options for perception; support multiple ways to perceive information" and "UDL Engagement—welcoming interests and identities; nurture joy and play." The first and second authors discussed the first author's codes during their weekly meetings to reach agreement and enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis. Specifically, the first author shared each section of the drama (e.g., the anticipatory set) along with a representative transcript and the associated codes. The second author then shared her perspectives, indicating agreement or disagreement, and offered additional codes when relevant. The authors used the UDL guidelines to inform their discussion and to resolve any

disagreements.

The Vosaic online tool (https://vosaic.com) was utilized to organize the codes and categories systematically. To better contextualize the findings, we represent the data based on a typical drama lesson structure.

Findings

Each drama lesson started with an anticipatory set, followed by a transition to the book or the activity, engagement with the text, a transition through a Magic portal (e.g., bag, dust, door) into the drama, the drama activity, exiting the drama through a Magic portal, and a closing activity.

We unpack these key drama components in sequence, demonstrating how they align with UDL principles by providing examples from various drama lessons.

Anticipatory Set

To prepare students for a drama activity, the anticipatory set started with a song in English or Spanish, depending on the language of the day, and continued with introducing new vocabulary and concepts related to the storybook or content. Multimodal and sensory elements, such as word cards, puppets, pictures, and sounds related to the lesson, were used for representation and engagement.

Songs

Songs were used to recruit students' interests, aligning with the UDL principle of "welcoming interests and identities" by designing "multiple means of engagement." Each drama activity began and ended with a drama song in English or Spanish to engage and prepare learners for drama time. Physical movements accompanied the lyrics, helping students engage with and remember the song. The TA and educators used two different drama songs, allowing students to become familiar with the songs while still providing them with choice regarding which song they wanted to sing for that day. For example:

[Children were sitting cross-legged on the carpet, facing the theatre teaching artist (TA), who was also seated cross-legged on the floor directly in front of them.]

TA: You guys get to choose a song today. We have two songs, don't we? We have one that says, "We're ready for drama time." [tapping her legs in rhythm with the song.] Or we have this one. "One pinky, two pinky." [Raising the right pinky finger, then the left pinky finger, in rhythm with the song].

David: Yeah, yeah. [nodding his head excitedly].

TA: That one? [pointing her finger towards him] You like that one?

David: Yeah.

TA: Okay, ready? One pinky, two pinky pointing at my brain, making curly swirlies. It's the imagination game. [While singing, she simultaneously raised her right pinky finger, then her left pinky finger, in rhythm with the song. She pointed both pinky fingers to her head and demonstrated curly swirlies. Then, she raised both hands to the top and lowered them to her sides in rhythm with the song].

[Children were singing and simultaneously demonstrating the movements together with her]

David: Again! [excitedly]

TA: [without a pause, she started to sing the song again]. One pinky two, pinky pointing at my brain, making curly swirlies. It's the imagination game.

[Children were singing and simultaneously demonstrating the movements together with her].

Here, the TA recruited the children's interest by offering a choice of age-appropriate songs to sing that nurtured joy (i.e., UDL engagement), which they demonstrated through their verbal and kinesthetic participation and engagement, including requests to sing the song again. Moreover, having the songs in English and Spanish embraced all students' linguistic backgrounds, aligning with the UDL representation consideration of cultivating "understanding and respect across languages and dialects." Furthermore, participation through movement also affirmed both linguistic and disability-related identities, as while some students could not verbally sing the song, they were still able to participate through their movement

(i.e., UDL Action and Expression). This affirmed their disability-related identities (i.e., communication modes) by honoring the non-verbal communication rather than insisting on verbal speech.

Introducing Key Words

In the anticipatory set, keywords in English and Spanish were introduced using multiple modalities, such as auditory, visual, and tactile, to enable each learner to access and understand the information. We identified that educators' ways of introducing keywords were aligned with "multiple means of representation," specifically by providing "options for perception" and "options for language and symbols." Providing "options for perception" involves representing information in multiple modalities to ensure all learners can access and understand it, while providing "options for language and symbols" entails clarifying vocabulary and symbols to enhance the accessibility of a lesson for everyone. Before reading the Spanish book "Monstruo Rosa" (Pink Monster) (de Dios, 2019), the TA introduced key vocabulary through facial expressions, gestures, repetition, segmenting exercises, and written words.

> TA: Vamos a read the story, pero primero vamos a aprender una palabra. (We're going to read the story, but first, we're going to learn a word). [making a surprised face].
>
> Children: Oh, oh.
>
> TA: Oh, oh. That's right.
>
> TA: La palabra es, di-fe-ren-te. Di-fe-ren-te. (The word is, di-ffe-rent. Di-ffe-rent).
>
> TA: Digan. [She placed her left hand on her ear, mimicking listening ears].
>
> Children: di-fe-ren-te.
>
> TA: Aquí es como se escribe. Sí, mira. Di-fe-ren-te. (Here's how it's written. Yes, look. Dif-fer-rent.) [Held a paper with "diferente" written on it and pointed to the syllabus while verbally saying it]. Contamos sílabas, ¿quieres? A ver. Di-fe-ren-te. (Let's count syllables, okay? Let's see. Dif-fer-rent). [Placing the paper on the board where the children could see it, and clapping her hands on her legs while counting the syllables].
>
> Children: Di-fe-ren-te [clapping their hands on their legs while counting the syllables].
>
> TA: Exacto. (Exactly)
>
> …
>
> TA: Son dos monstruos. (There are two monsters). [Showing the children a picture of the monsters from the book]. Dos. Uno y dos. (Two. One and two). [Pointing to each monster in the picture].
>
> TA: Son diferentes. Este monstruo. (They are different. This monster.)
>
> TA: ¿Es grande o pequeño? (Is it big or small?) [Holding her arms up to demonstrate "big," and then she made her body small and used her left fingers to show "tiny" to demonstrate small].
>
> Maria: Grande. (Big). [holding her arms up to demonstrate big].
>
> Everyone: Grande. (Big). [holding their arms up to demonstrate big].
>
> TA: Sí. Muy bien. ¿Este monstruo es pequeño o grande? (Big, yes. Very good. Is this monster small or big?) [Pointing to the small monster in the picture, she made a "tiny" movement and then held her arms up to demonstrate "big"].
>
> Maria: Pequeño. (Small).
>
> TA: Pequeño, sí. (Small, yes).
>
> Children: Pequeño. (Small).
>
> TA: Exactamente. Son diferentes. (Exactly. They are different).

This Spanish lesson, along with the English ones, followed a similar structure, aligning with the three UDL principles. The TA pre-taught the key vocabulary needed for the book (i.e., UDL representation: "clarifying vocabulary, symbols, and language structures") through multiple modalities (i.e., UDL representation: "supporting multiple ways to perceive information") (CAST, 2024). She demonstrated the meaning of *differente* by providing pictures of different monsters, using gestures, and allowing the students to say and segment the word. The Spanish lessons also provided unique opportunities to use and sustain Spanish-dominant EMwDs' home languages through UDL representation considerations, such as

"represent[ing] a diversity of perspectives and identities in authentic ways" and "cultivat[ing] understanding and respect across languages and dialects" (CAST, 2024). For instance, Maria, a Spanish-dominant EMwD, was highly engaged and responded to the TA's questions first as the Spanish lessons were culturally and linguistically responsive (i.e., UDL Engagement: "optimizing relevance, value, and authenticity") and possibly fostered her sense of belonging, as she saw her language represented in a substantial way through its inclusion in a read-aloud (i.e., UDL engagement: "foster belonging and community") (CAST, 2024). Furthermore, UDL Action and Expression— "varying and honoring the methods for response, navigation, and movement"—were simultaneously present as all students demonstrated their understanding both verbally and nonverbally through movement-based participation. Pairing words with movement has also been effective in language learning (e.g., total physical response practice) (Inciman Celik et al., 2021).

Engaging with the Text

After the anticipatory set, including the introduction of keywords, the educators transition to the storybook read-aloud. For example, in the anticipatory set of the book "Hiding Phil," (Barclay, 2013), the TA focused on the keywords about elephants, such as *big*, *huge*, *gigantic*, and *enormous*, and asked students where elephants lived, with the responses of zoo and jungle. She also used an elephant sound, pretending that the elephant was outside the classroom, to increase student engagement.

TA: Let's read the book first. It says, Hiding Phil. What does that mean to hide something?

Maria: [going down to the ground to demonstrate hide].

Sofia: Maria is going down [while bending to the ground, she demonstrated Maria's movement to hide].

TA: Oh, going down. [demonstrating going down].

Ryan: Elephant is making sound.

Ryan: Elephant is said "brr" [making an elephant sound].

TA: Sure did. I wonder if he's out there still. We'll find out soon enough. Hiding Phil.

…

TA: …That's very wonderful. Hiding Phil, look at this picture. [showing the picture to children].

Izaac: It's a picture of a bus.

Sofia: Picture of a bus.

TA: Picture of a bus? What's on that bus? Ryan, look at this picture. [showing the picture to Ryan].

Brian: An elephant. [pointing to the elephant in the picture].

TA: What's on that bus?

Ryan: People and [an] elephant. [pointing to the people and the elephant in the picture].

TA: An elephant on a bus? [with a high-pitched voice].

Ryan: Yeah!

TA: That's crazy. [with a surprised voice].

Isaac: That's crazy.

TA: Look, an elephant. An elephant… [with a surprised voice]. Look at his face. What does his face look like? [showing a surprised face].

Isaac: Surprise.

TA: Surprise, exactly. Let me see your surprised faces. [pointing to each child].

Children: [making a surprised face].

TA: [making a surprised face with children].

TA: It's an elephant. Oh, my goodness. Oh, ho ho! His name is Phil.

Isaac: Let's play with Phil. This is a town. There is a bus. [coming to the center and pointing to the pictures].

TA: That's totally right. Oh, my goodness, it does say, "Come play with us, Phil."

...

TA: [continue reading] Mom and Dad, we love Phil. [with an excited voice]. Oh, my goodness, look at their faces. [pointing to the picture].

Isaac: He's happy.

TA: He's happy. How do you know he's happy?

Ryan: Elephant is holding a doggy. [explaining what he saw in the picture].

TA: That's right, there is a doggy. The elephant is holding the doggy. [pointing to the picture]. How do you know he's happy?

Maria: The face.

TA: By his face.

Ryan: Excuse me, excuse me.

TA: Yes.

Ryan: Boys and girls, is said, "Mom, dad." [with a high volume].

TA: They did say that. [continue reading] Oh, oh. [with a surprised face].

Isaac: Oh, oh, there's a ducky in the bubble bath. [pointing to the pictures].

TA: There's a ducky in the bubble bath. Look at their faces. [pointing to the picture with a surprised face]. Oh, oh.

Children: Oh, oh. [demonstrating a surprised face].

…

TA: Do you think Mom and Dad are going to want--? [elephant sound coming from the classroom]. What is that noise?

Children: [making excited sounds, some close their ears, some turn around to see the elephant with surprised faces].

TA: …Wait a minute. Let me go see. There might be an elephant outside. [standing up].

Isaac: I want to come with you.

TA: You do?

Isaac: Yes.

TA: Let's go very quietly…Let's see if there's an elephant. Let me go first…Quietly, quietly. Do you see any--? Look. I see an elephant out there. [pointing to the window of the classroom door].

David: I want to see.

TA: [with a surprised and excited tone]. Oh my Gosh. It's a very big elephant.

David: I want to see.

TA: Look. Can you see him? He's right there. [pointing outside].

David: No.

TA: Yes, use your imagination. He's right there.

Max: I want to see.

Isaac: That's one pinky, two pinky. [started the drama song].

TA: Keep pointing at my brain. Making curly swirlies. It's the imagination game…

Children: [sing the drama song].

TA: I imagine an elephant right out there… Use your imagination. What should we do?

…

TA: Should we take him to breakfast with us?

Children: Yeah.

This example illustrates a clear alignment with the UDL principles by fostering engagement,

providing multiple means of representation, and acknowledging diverse forms of action and expression. The TA used dramatic expressions during the read-aloud to enhance engagement, sustain interest, and nurture joy. Children demonstrated their knowledge in diverse ways, such as Maria's movement to illustrate hiding, which the educators acknowledged, exemplifying the UDL consideration of "vary and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement." This acknowledgment was particularly significant for Maria, a Spanish-dominant EMwD, as it validated her nonverbal participation during English drama time and fostered her sense of belonging. Additionally, children were allowed to move to point to the pictures to express their understanding. The elephant sound increased student engagement, evident in their excited facial expressions. These activities allowed children to transition to the "imagined worlds" central to DBP. When some children expected to see a real elephant, Isaac initiated the drama song, "One pinky, two picky," which can be interpreted as differentiating between real and imagination/drama time.

Magic Portal (Bag, Chalk, or Dust)

After the anticipatory set involving drama and engaging with the text, the TA and the teacher used a magic portal—a magic bag, dust, or chalk—to transform into characters from a story. The magic portal is a drama technique designed to help children formally enter the imaginary world of the story, either by becoming a specific character (magic bag or dust) or entering into a specific environment (magic chalk/door). In each instance, the children deepen their understanding by either assuming the physical elements and movements of their character (becoming bears and moving like a bear) or experiencing the sensory differences of the new environment (seeing ice on the door, opening it, and feeling a blast of cold air).

In the magic bag activity, children's attention was drawn to an imaginary bag on the ceiling containing all the materials needed to become a character. The class worked together to pull the bag down to the ground, and everyone took a piece of the magic bag to open it collectively. Educators scaffolded the students' brainstorming process, guiding them to identify what they need to become the characters. For instance, after reading the "Building a House" book (Barton, 1990), students became construction workers using a magic bag.

TA: So now we know how to build a house. Oh, excellent. Now we're going to enter the magical world of imagination and become construction workers, right, Ms. Sofia?

Sofia: Yes! We are going to be construction workers. Are you guys ready?

Children: Yes.

Sofia: First, we need to stand up.

[everyone standing up in a circle].

TA: Stand up.

Sofia: Now, we need to get our magic bag. It's up there. [Looking up at the ceiling and holding her arms up].

Sofia: Are you ready?

Luis: I can't. [Jumping to try to reach the ceiling].

Sofia: So, we need to pull on the rope. Are you ready? [Looking up at the ceiling and pretending to hold the rope of a magic bag].

Sofia: One, two, three. Pull. [Pretending to pull a heavy magic bag, using expressive facial and body movements].

[Everyone reaching the ceiling holding the rope pulls the magic bag down].

…

TA: All right, everyone. Let's open our bag. See it?

[Everyone reaches for the bag, grabs a piece of it, and opens it together].

Sofia: Wow, what do we have in here? We have a lot of [stuff]. [with a surprised face] We'll be construction workers…I see something that construction workers wear.

Gabriel: I got a hammer. [showing her hand to Sofia].

Sofia: You got a hammer. Let's get a hammer.

[Everyone pretending to take a hammer out of the magic bag].

…

Sofia: Let's put it on our--

TA: In our belts.

Sofia: In our belts.

TA: Yes, we got construction worker belts on.

Sofia: All right…What else do construction workers have?

Luis: [jumping with his finger up]. A hat. A hat.

Sofia: A hard hat. Let's get--

TA: Excellent idea.

Sofia: Let's get a hard hat.

[Everyone pretending to take a hard hat out of the magic bag].

TA: Why do we need a hard hat, you guys? Why do we need a hat? Why?

Luis: Because we need to build this house. [Walked to the board, opened the book, and pointed to the house].

…

TA: So, so far, we have our hammer in our belt, and our hard hat.

Gabriel: [is on the ground demonstrating a sawing movement].

TA: Oh, look. It looks like you're doing-- What is it?

Luis: We need the saw.

TA: Oh, well, we better get our saw. Get your saw, but be very careful because it's sharp.

[Everyone pretending to take a saw out of the magic bag carefully].

TA: I think we should put our saw behind us, just to be safe. We need to be safe. Safety first, okay? [demonstrating a movement of placing the saw behind themselves].

[Children pretending to place their saws behind themselves carefully].

…

Sofia: Now…I think we're ready to build our house. Are you guys ready?

…

TA: Okay. …but wait, we've got to close up our bags first. Close it up.

[Everyone pretending to close the magic bag].

TA: Now that nothing's in it, it doesn't weigh very much, does it? That means it's not heavy, right? Let's pull it up. Ready? One, two, three. Oh, there it goes. Excellent. [everyone pretending to pull it up to the ceiling].

In the magic bag activity, we identified connections to UDL principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression. The imagination aspect of the activity aligned with the UDL engagement consideration of "nurtur[ing] joy and play," as students were pretending to dress themselves in construction gear. Additionally, the cooperative nature of the activity fostered "collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning" as well as a sense of "belonging and community." Students built on each other's responses to collectively dress themselves. Regarding action and expression, the children demonstrated various ways of participating and expressing their ideas—such as demonstrating the use of a saw through body movements—which honored the principle of "varying and honoring the methods for response, navigation, and movement." This is critical, as Sofia and the TA did not privilege only the verbal answers but instead modeled multimodal forms of communication. The students took notice of this, as Luis built on Gabriel's sawing motion to state, "We need the saw," indicating he valued and understood

Gabriel's communication. Finally, this activity utilized multiple means of representation through "clarify[ing] vocabulary, symbols, and language structures,"; "cultivat[ing] language and respect across languages and dialects," and "connect[ing] prior knowledge to new learning." The TA clarified the vocabulary *hard hat* by asking students, "Why do we need a hard hat?" This functioned to differentiate a hard hat from other types of hats, like baseball caps or top hats. The collaborative nature of the activity also allowed students to use what they already knew about tools and construction (i.e., their prior knowledge) to the new vocabulary present in "Building A House."

Drama Part

The final drama unit utilized the technique of "group story building," where the book was read up to the point where a problem arose in the story. Then, the group stepped into the story through a magic portal (door, dust, or door) and worked together to solve the problem by brainstorming and acting out ideas. The last book, "The Gigantic Turnip," was about a turnip that grew to an enormous size, needing the grandfather and his family, including the grandmother, the dog, and the cat, to work together to pull it out (Tolstoy, 2005). The TA read the story up to the point when the grandfather and grandmother tried to pull the turnip together. Then, using the magic door, the TA guided the students to draw a magic door using magic chalk. The students suggested adding a door handle and a key to their door. Through this magic door, they entered the imaginary world of the magic garden, where they saw the enormous turnip and aimed to solve the problem together.

> TA: Let's think about this. [pointing to the imaginary turnip on the ground]. We want to eat this turnip. We have to get it out of the ground so we can eat it [pretending to pull it out and to eat the turnip], and that's what? [showing her biceps with both arms raised, demonstrating her muscles].
>
> Maria: Muscles. [showing her muscles with arms up].
>
> TA: Muscles and our strength. [With an acknowledging tone, showing her muscles with arms up].
>
> Brian: I can pull it out by myself.
>
> TA: Do you think you could pull it out by yourself? Let's try, everyone. Let's grab the turnip, and on the count of three… [pretending to hold the turnip with both hands on the ground].
>
> [Children pretending to hold the turnip with both hands on the ground].
>
> David: No, one hand.
>
> TA: Okay, you use one hand. Let's try to pull one, two, three. [Pretending to pull the enormous turnip up, using body and facial expressions to show struggles. Then, she fell to the ground]. Don't come out. Oh, my goodness, it stuck on the ground.
>
> TA: What we're going to do?
>
> …
>
> TA: Let's think about it. Everyone, have a seat. I need your ideas to help me…. We're working on getting our turnip out of the ground… let's concentrate. Let's think: how can we get this turnip out of the ground?... It's just so big. We can't get it out with one hand or with two hands. [demonstrating pulling the turnip out with one hand and then both hands].
>
> …
>
> TA: Let's talk to our partners…Let's try bridges up. [holding her hands up].
>
> …
>
> Isaac: I want to try.
>
> TA: You wanna try it? Okay, Isaac is trying. [Isaac, holding his hands up, touched his hands to the TA's hands as if forming a bridge].
>
> [Everyone paired up and formed a bridge].
>
> TA: Okay, so let's think about it. What can we do? Our question is, I wonder how we can get that turnip out of the ground. Okay, bridges down, now. What can we do? Let's think about. [pointing to her head to demonstrate thinking].
>
> …

Brian: How about the rope?

TA: A rope? Brian, what will we do with the rope?

Brian: [coming to the center on his knees] I want [unintelligible] [pointing with his fingers to the imaginary turnip and making a small circle with his hand]- to the turnip when we pull it out.

TA: We would put the rope on the turnip and pull it out. Ahhh [Making a surprised and acknowledging facial expression] …I think that's a good idea now. Let's try that. Shall we try it?

Brian: Yeah.

…

TA: Alright, everyone, [looking behind and trying to find the rope] look behind you; there's a big rope [pretending to grab the big rope]. Let's grab our rope.

[Everyone grabbing their ropes from behind].

[David pretending to hold his hands up, showing he was holding something].

TA: [pointing at David's hands]. That's your big, thick rope?

David: Yes.

TA: Okay, grab it. Let's try it on the turnip's stem. Very carefully, tying on.

[Everyone pretending to tie their ropes to the turnip's stem carefully].

TA: Okay, is it strong?

David: No.

Isaac: Yes.

TA: Make it stronger. [David, on the ground, pretending to tie the rope stronger].

TA: Okay. All right, everybody, let's stand back over here.

TA: Let's grab some rope, everyone.

[Everyone in a circle around the imaginary turnip, pretending to hold the rope to pull].

TA: You guys ready? Okay, now, on the count of three, we're going to pull the rope and see if the turnip comes out. Ready? One, two, three pull. [Pretending to pull harder while staggering backward; speaking with a high tone of voice]. It came off the stem.

David: Oh, no.

TA: The rope slipped out the -

…

TA: You guys, listen. Today, we didn't get the turnip out of the ground…we can try that tomorrow because this turnip is stuck in here…. next time we're going to try again, okay?... What did we try? We tried to tie the rope, didn't we?

Brian: Yes.

TA: And what happened?

Brian: The stem came off.

TA: The stem came off, so next time we're going to think about another idea to get the turnip out of the ground.

TA: For now, we go to go back inside our magic door, right? Because it's time…Okay, get inside. Open your magic door.

Sofia: Open your door.

TA: We're going to go back into the classroom. Open, go inside.

David: No, stay aquí (here).

TA: Close the door.

David: No, stay aquí (here).

TA: Now you want to stay aquí? (here) [laugh].

David: Yes. Let's go.

TA: We'll come back now to the classroom. We'll come back to the magic garden another day, okay? We'll be thinking about that turnip because we need to eat it to get what?

The next day, the TA read the Spanish version of "The Gigantic Turnip" until reaching the same problem as in the English version, introducing the words "fuerza" (strength) and "nabo" (turnip) during the anticipatory set. Then, they entered the imaginary garden through a magic door activity and continued brainstorming how to solve the problem of pulling the enormous turnip out. David had an idea:

David: [putting his index fingers to his head]. Horns.

Sofia: ¿Lo vas a poner en el carro para que lo jale? (Will you put it in the car so it can pull it?)

David: Aquí. (Here).

[David moved toward the imaginary enormous turnip, pretending to be a cow by lowering his head to the ground and pushing the turnip with his head].

All educators: Ohh. [Showing a facial and verbal expression demonstrating an understanding of his movement].

Elena: Muy buena idea. (Excellent idea).

Sofia: Lo vas a querer sacar con los cuernos. (You'll want to take it out with the horns) …Esa es muy buena idea (That's a very good idea).

…

Sofia: Vamos a usar los cuernos, así como dijo David, vamos a usar nuestros cuernos para tratar de agarrar el nabo. (We're going to use the horns, just like David said; we're going to use our horns to try to grab the turnip). [Pretending to be a cow by holding her index fingers next to her head, pointing forward to mimic horns].

TA: Vamos a transformarnos en toros y yo sé cómo. (We will transform ourselves into bulls, and I know how). [making circles with left arm to increase excitement].

TA: Porque Ms Martha siempre tiene polvo mágico en el bolsillo, es verdad. (Because Martha always has magic dust in her pocket, it's true). [Putting her right hand in her pocket and quickly taking the magic dust out].

TA: …Cuando echo polvo mágico encima de tu cabeza, serás un toro con cuernos muy afilados. ¿Listo Sofia? Tú eres la primera. (When I sprinkle magic dust on your head, you will be a bull with very sharp horns. Ready, Sofia? You're the first one). [Pretending to hold magic dust onto her right hand] [Martha pretending to take a small amount of magic dust from her left hand and sprinkle it on Sofia's head]. Klinglinglingling [with a playful expression while sprinkling].

Sofia: Mira mis cuernos. (Look at my horns). [Sofia placing her index fingers on her head to show that she had become a bull.]

…

TA: Toro. Es eso él. ¿Quién más quiere ser toro? (Bull. That's him. Who else wants to be a bull?)

[Martha sprinkling magic dust onto all the children's heads, transforming them into bulls].

TA: Listos toros. A la de tres vamos a meter nuestros cuernos en el nabo. (Ready, bulls. On the count of three, we're going to stick our horns in the turnip).

[Being in the role of a bull, everyone pushed the turnip with their strength].

Sofia: ¿Estás lista? (Are you ready?)

TA: A ver toro, échate. (Let's see, bull, lie down).

[Their horns got stuck to the turnip, and they couldn't pull them out].

TA: ¿Ahora qué hacemos? (What do we do now?)

Sofia: ¿qué hacemos? (What do we do now?).

TA: No puedo. (I can't)

Sofia: No se puede. (It can't be done).

Elena: Ayúdanos., ayúdanos. (Help us, help us).

Sofia: No puedo sacar- (I can't get-).

TA: Estoy enganchada, no puedo sacar mis cuernos. Nuestros cuernos están enganchados. ¿Qué hacemos? A la de tres sacamos cuernos. Uno, dos, tres. (I'm hooked; I can't get my horns out. Our horns are hooked. What do we do?

On the count of three, we get the horns out: one, two, three).

[Everyone pulling their horns out of the turnip with struggling voices and body movements].

Sofia: No se salió el nabo. (The turnip didn't come out).

TA: No salió y ahora tiene muchos agujeros. (It didn't come out and now has many holes).

…

Everyone sat in a circle, and Marta pretended to blow magic dust from her hand onto the children to transform them back into children in the classroom. The second attempt was also unsuccessful, so they decided to try again the next day.

The next day, Sofia led the drama time as a solo lesson and brainstormed again how to pull the turnip.

Sofia: Can you guys tell me your ideas? How can we take out the turnip?

Issac: Together.

Sofia: Together?

Isaac: Yes.

Sofia: Yes?

David: Muscle.

Sofia: Then we use our muscles?

…

Sofia: How will you pull it together? Can you show me how you would pull it?

…

Sofia: …So, you'll go behind and pull and pull?

Elena: That's what he was saying. Yes.

David: Pull hard.

Sofia: All right, you know what? We're going to try that... Come on, Brian, behind David. Ven Maria. Aquí, atrás de él. (Come, Maria. Here, behind him). I'm right behind you.

…

Sofia: [To David] You want to be first? Okay. Go ahead. Brian, behind David. All right, show me how to pull it. Ready? You're going to pull it. Everybody, use your strength. Ready? Pull it. Ready? Show me. I'll be back, David, pull it. Pull. Everybody, let's go. Keep pulling, keep pulling. [Pretending to pull it together with struggling facial expressions and movements].

…

Sofia: Did it work?

Isaac: No.

Brian: No.

Sofia: No. [laughs].

Elena: What else to do?

Then, they tried the same thing a second time with more strength, and it worked. They pretended to eat the turnip to gain more strength. They used magic dust to transform back into students in the classroom.

These three-day drama lessons focused on group story-building activities aligned with UDL principles of engagement, representation, and action and expression. Representation, specifically "support[ing] multiple ways to perceive information" was evident when the TA and the teacher used physical representation to convey ideas and concepts, enhancing students' understanding, engagement, and participation. For instance, Maria, a Spanish-dominant EMwD, was able to verbally participate by saying "muscles" after the TA raised both arms to show her biceps, representing muscles and strength. This physical gesture provided Maria with the context she needed to understand the English word

"muscle." UDL engagement principles, particularly "nurtu[ing] joy and play," "optimiz[ing] choice and autonomy," "clarif[ing] the meaning and purpose of goals," "foster[ing] collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning," and "offer[ing] action-oriented feedback" was also evident throughout the drama activities. Through collective brainstorming of possible solutions to the problem—how to pull the enormous turnip out—and acting out the students' suggestions, the activity not only nurtured joy and play but also fostered collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning. Students were autonomous in their solutions, and the educators provided fun and age-appropriate feedback. For example, when acting out the suggestion of pulling the turnip out using a cow's horns, the TA said, "It didn't come out and now has many holes." Throughout the drama lesson, students' physical movements to participate and share their ideas, such as David's physical movement to suggest using horns to pull the turnip out, exemplified UDL's action and expression of consideration of var[ing] and honor the methods for response, navigation, and movement.

Using the Spanish language also supported "cultivate[ing] understanding and respect across languages and dialects" (UDL representation) and "foster[ing] belonging and community," particularly for Spanish-dominant EMwDs (UDL engagement).

Conclusion and Discussion

This qualitative study examined the connections between bilingual DBP and UDL by analyzing 18 drama-based lesson videos in two DLBE preschool classrooms serving only EMwDs. While Glass et al. (2013) argued for the alignment between UDL and drama using theoretical connections, this study empirically demonstrated that alignment. We found that the bilingual drama lessons, led by the teaching artist and teacher, incorporated all three UDL principles—multiple means of engagement, representation, and action and expression—as well as several considerations, making learning more inclusive, engaging, and accessible to all EMwDs. While UDL has been shown to enhance engagement and learning in the early childhood setting (e.g., Ewe & Galvin, 2023; Ostrosky et al., 2024), and DBP has been demonstrated to increase literacy skills, engagement, inclusion, and problem-solving (e.g., Lee et al., 2015; Kilinc et al., 2016; 2017), there is no empirical discussion of how they contribute to each other to fully include and teach all learners.

Bilingual drama-based storytime lessons incorporated UDL representation guidelines by: a) explicitly presenting information through multiple modalities, including visuals, body movements, gestures, facial expressions, real items, and pairing gestures with keywords; b) pre-teaching key vocabulary for the lesson; and (c) using bilingual instruction to represent and sustain EMwDs' linguistic backgrounds while cultivating understanding and respecting across languages. Through these lessons, all EMwDs, especially for linguistically minoritized students—Spanish-dominant EMwDs—had opportunities to engage with content in their home languages (i.e., UDL representation), making learning more meaningful and authentic, fostering their sense of belonging (i.e., UDL engagement), and allowing them to demonstrate their knowledge through multiple modalities, such as gesture, verbally, and pointing (i.e., UDL action and expression).

Bilingual drama-based storytime incorporated the UDL action and expression consideration of "vary[ing] methods of response, navigation, and movement," enabling EMwDs to participate through both verbal and nonverbal modes. For example, while Maria, the Spanish-dominant EMwD, was able to verbally participate during the Spanish drama lesson, she was *still* able to participate during English drama lessons through gesture and movement, which not only allowed her to communicate her ideas but also expanded her understanding of English vocabulary. Importantly, both her verbal and nonverbal contributions in both languages were acknowledged by the teaching artists and the teacher, fostering Maria's competence. If Maria had been in either an English-only or DLBE context without DBP, it is possible that her competence would not have been recognized, or she may not have been able to demonstrate her knowledge. This finding echoes other studies on DBP in early childhood contexts, which found increased gesture use and embodied learning in DBP lessons (Bernstein et al., 2024; Deeg et al., 2020; Kilinc et al., 2016, 2017). In turn, students' embodied behaviors not only enhanced their story recall, ultimately supporting comprehension

(Bernstein et al., 2024) but also allowed teachers to see their students as competent (Kilinc et al., 2016; Farrand, 2015).

EMwDs' multimodal participation further contributed to their competence, as other EMwDs acknowledged specific students' nonverbal contributions. For instance, Gabriel demonstrated a sawing movement to suggest that a saw was needed to become a construction worker in the magic bag activity. Luis, a classmate, recognized and verbalized the idea, positioning Gabriel as competent despite not sharing his idea verbally. The multimodal participation inherent in drama structures facilitated his competence. In alignment with this finding, Farrand (2015) also found that drama allowed students to communicate in diverse ways (e.g., acting out), contributing to their confidence, and that they were positioned as capable by their peers and the teacher.

The UDL-infused bilingual DBP lessons moved beyond translating English lessons into Spanish and vice versa to provide authentic representation and engagement with students' home languages. Karaolis (2023) demonstrated the ways DBP created a language-rich environment for students to play and experiment with the English language, a finding echoed in our study. However, the DLBE context of this study extends these findings to speakers of English and Spanish. We observed students playing with language in both Spanish and English, particularly students who were not dominant in those languages. For example, as previously mentioned, the Spanish drama lessons were culturally and linguistically responsive (i.e., UDL Engagement: "optimizing relevance, value, and authenticity") and fostered Spanish-dominant EMwDs' sense of belonging, as they saw their language represented in the content (i.e., UDL engagement: "foster belonging and community"). This was facilitated through the multiple ways content was presented (e.g., gesture, movement, verbally, facial expressions, interactions with real objects) and multiple ways students engaged with that content (e.g., gesture, verbally, pointing). We see the ways this benefited English and Spanish-dominant students alike, as their languaging practices and ways of being were authentically valued and taken up by their peers and teachers alike. We interpret this as an expansion of translanguaging pedagogy, which emphasizes how students use their full linguistic repertoire to make sense of the world and communicate (García, 2009). Our findings show that EMwDs engaged in multimodal translanguaging, using movement, gesture, and facial expressions to make sense of content and communicate across English and Spanish. This insight expands translanguaging theory by considering embodied multimodal communication as a critical meaning-making tool in bilingual learning contexts.

Bilingual DBP allowed EMwDs to engage in problem-solving (as demonstrated during the reading of "The Gigantic Turnip") through collaboration with peers and educators. This group story-building drama unit specifically exemplified the UDL's engagement consideration of "foster[ing] collaboration, interdependence, and collective learning," as all EMwDs contributed their ideas to solving the problem through multimodal participation, including movement and verbal expressions. This could also lead "foster[ing] belonging and community" in the classroom. Increased collaboration and belonging have been documented in previous studies on DBP, which are conceptualized as some of the components of inclusive education (Farrand, 2015; Kilinc et al., 2017).

This study's findings are particularly significant due to the DLBE preschool setting serving EMwDs. Although these two DLBE preschool classrooms were segregated self-contained classrooms that only served students with disabilities, they were able to employ linguistically and neurodiversity-affirming practices in a language-rich environment. These settings have been documented to utilize nonchallenging curricula with didactic, teacher-centered practices conducted in English (Bacon et al., 2016; Kurth et al., 2025). This is in part due to educational policy that does not accurately meet the needs of EMwDs (e.g., Cioè-Peña, 2017; de Valenzuela et al., 2016), leading to a siloed approach to education that attends to either disability or language-related labels. The bilingual drama-based lessons demonstrated that, when given engaging, linguistically affirming practices, EMwDs *can* engage with complex concepts, problem-solving, and literacy across languages. We ask ourselves, what more could these students have demonstrated if they had been exposed to instruction in an inclusive general education setting? What new ideas could have been generated with the collaboration of a more diverse group of students? Thus, we suggest that

integrating bilingual DBP into inclusive general education classrooms could provide even greater opportunities for peer modeling, collaborative problem-solving, and richer language development. Indeed, the TAs and classroom teachers utilized strategies easily replicable in general education classrooms, such as pre-teaching and segmenting vocabulary, as well as explicit instruction (Archer & Hughes, 2011) that would benefit all learners. Inclusive DBP teachers can continue to use realia to supplement the drama strategies and introduce concepts, leveraging the UDL principle of multiple means of representation (e.g., Gauvreau et al., 2019). Future research should explore how bilingual DBP can be leveraged in inclusive settings to support all students.

Declarations

Authors' Declarations

Publisher's Declarations

Editorial Acknowledgement: The editorial process of this article was completed under the editorship of Dr. Mine Gol-Guven through a double-blind peer review with external reviewers.

Publisher's Note: Journal of Childhood, Education & Society remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliation.

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