



UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
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MEBANE EARLY LITERACY CENTER



MELC Brief Series

Translating Research for Literacy Educators

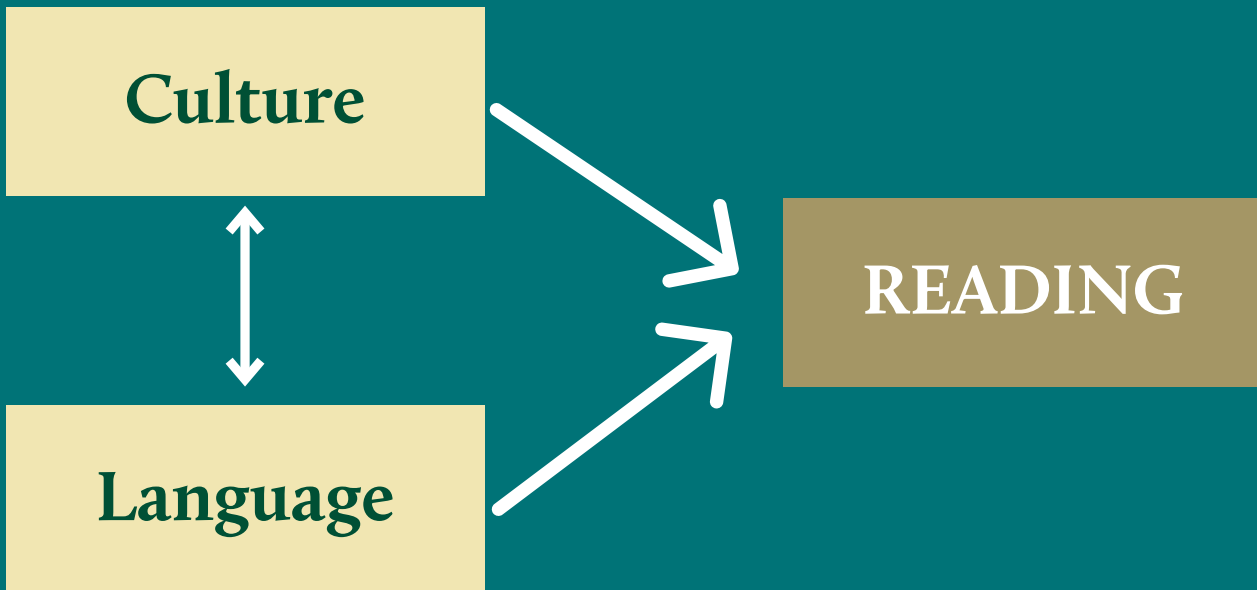
SCORE 5:
Promoting Reading Proficiency and Engagement through Culture, Language, and Identity

SCORE 
Science of Comprehension for Reading Excellence

CULTURAL SUSTENANCE VIEW OF READING (CSV)

(Peele & Nash, 2025)

Cultural Sustenance View of Reading (CSV) is a reading model that centers around children and their cultural and linguistic experiences as a network within the reading process.



"Culture and language shape the way people read."

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Supporting Comprehension Across Learners

Identifying and Applying the Cultural Sustainance View of Reading

Area	What It Includes	Instructional Applications
Ways of Reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word reading • Language comprehension • Strategic thinking • Vocabulary development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explicitly teach phonics, vocabulary, and language structures • Relate new content and learning to students' knowledge and experiences • Provide supported practice with a variety of texts
Ways of Knowing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture • Linguistic knowledge • Community-based knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use texts that reflect a range of experiences and perspectives • Draw on students' background and cultural knowledge • Incorporate multiple ways of expressing and understanding ideas
Ways of Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention • Memory • Meaning-making processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support students in making connections and inferences • Deepen understanding with questioning and discussion • Provide relevant, meaningful reading contexts
Ways of Being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identity • Relationships • Language • Lived experiences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build and maintain strong relationships with student and family • Encourage student voice, participation, and collaboration

MULTILINGUAL PERSPECTIVES OF READING

(Ascenzi-Moreno, 2024)

A *multilingual perspective on reading* centers students' linguistic and cultural resources, including those who speak multiple languages or are developing English, and integrates them with key components of reading to inform instruction.

Translanguaging draws attention to reading as a multidimensional process in which students engage their multilingualism, multimodality, and embodied experiences and histories (García, 2020; García & Kleifgen, 2019). It is focused on how bilingual people language and how they interact with the text.



CLASSROOM APPLICATION EXAMPLES FOR MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS

Multilingual Learners' (MLs) reading development is not identical to monolingual readers' reading development.

Phoneme manipulation (word chaining) is a typical first grade activity. Students are asked, "When I change 'amp,' in, 'lamp,' to, 'imp,' what word do I make?" For a monolingual student who uses English in their daily lives, manipulating the parts of the word and understanding the word is seamless, because the words that they create may be within their working vocabulary.

MLs may still be trying to figure out what they are expected to do, and they may not understand what words they are creating through phonemic manipulation. Many of these exercises, while not intended to engage students with nonsense words, may result in MLs solely engaging with nonsense words during these activities. This results in MLs missing a key purpose of the activity, realizing that changing one phoneme in a word creates a whole new word.

Design reading instruction that centers multilingual learners.

Skill	Centering Instruction Around Multilingual Learners
Phonics	Talk about letter sounds across languages (metalinguaging). "I know that many of you speak different languages with your families at home. Different languages have different sounds and some even have different alphabets! I am going to show you a letter. Let us hear how it sounds in English. If you have this letter in your language how does it sound?"
Phoneme Manipulation (word chaining) Last → fast → fist → fish	Explain the purpose of phoneme manipulation activities, point out changing one phoneme can change the word into a new word, provide meanings of words, and use words the students already know.
Comprehension	Use translanguaging, dialogue and discussion that honors language resources; translations and explanations of key vocabulary. During a 2nd-grade reading lesson, the teacher introduces three vocabulary words from the story with pictures and translations. Students turn and talk with a partner in English or their home language about the story. One student gives an example of the vocabulary word from the story in Spanish, then shares the idea in English with the class.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

(Ascenzi-Moreno, 2024;
Peele & Nash, 2025)

1

Center culture in literacy practices: Ways of reading, ways of knowing, ways of thinking, and ways of being.

2

Shift away from an add-on perspective: Develop lessons that center multilingual learners' perspectives by connecting to students' language resources (words and phrases) and their experiences and cultural knowledge of concepts being read.

3

Integrate word work and meaning: Foundational skills should include context. For example, when decoding words in isolation, explain the meaning of the words.

4

Consider how reading is more complex than decoding and language comprehension: integrate multilingual perspectives with all reading components in the Active View of Reading (Duke & Cartwright, 2022) to more accurately design reading instruction.

5

No one assessment is all encompassing; teachers can piece together information collected about multilingual students' decoding, vocabulary, comprehension, and reading behaviors and attitudes, and if possible, across languages, through formal and informal assessments.

Citations

Peele, R., & Nash, K. T. (2025). "I Am the Universe": Toward a Reader Model That Centers Culture. *The Reading Teacher*, 78(5), 258-266.

Ascenzi-Moreno, L. (2024). Toward a multilingual perspective on reading: Aligning emergent bilinguals' resources with theories of reading and implications for instruction. *The Reading Teacher*, 77(6), 918-926.

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