

Similarities: English and Spanish

In Spanish/English dual language programs, teachers can take advantage of the similarities between the languages to support children's early literacy development:

- **Letters**

With the exception of three additional letters used in Spanish (ch, ñ, ll), English and Spanish alphabet letters are the same.

- **Consonants**

Thirteen consonants (B, C, D, F, K, L, M, N, P, S, T, W, Y) make the same sounds in English and in Spanish. By beginning letter sound work with the more commonly occurring letters from this list (e.g., B, C, D, F, L, M, N, P, S, T), teachers can give children a head start in both languages.

Differences: English and Spanish

There are, however, some clear distinctions between the languages, and those are what often cause problems for second-language learners. There are some sounds and patterns that occur in one language but are not present at all in the other, and recognizing and manipulating these sounds/patterns often poses particular problems for young children.

For example, native English speakers may find the "trilled" Spanish r difficult to produce, and native Spanish speakers may have difficulty with the following English sounds and patterns that do not occur in Spanish:

- The consonant sounds /j/, /r/, /v/, /z/
- The digraph /sh/
- The "schwa" sound /ə/
- Initial consonant digraphs that begin with s (e.g., ship)
- Final consonant blends and digraphs (e.g., best, with)
- The lax, or "short," sounds of the vowels a, i, and u

The absence of the lax sounds of the vowels a, i, and u can cause particular difficulty for young children because beginning reading instruction in English focuses on words that follow the Consonant-Vowel-Consonant (CVC) spelling pattern, and those words always have short vowels. Thus, a typical preschool activity, such as matching CVC words that rhyme, sometimes requires additional support for Spanish speaking preschoolers, who may initially find it difficult to distinguish between vowel sounds that they're not used to hearing in their own language.

Taken from <https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/early-literacy-instruction-dual-language-preschools-spanishenglish>