

## Dual Language Curriculum Part 2

[INTRODUCTION]

**[0:00:06.7] ANNOUNCER:** Next is Dr. Charlene Wrighton to discuss everything early education about your children or students in our new show, Ed. Talks with Dr. Char.

[INTERVIEW]

**[0:00:21.4] CW:** Hello, this is Dr. Char Wrighton and I am here to reintroduce Priscilla Hernandez Pou to you from the Dominican Republic, she's our partner in Zoo-phonics and she has her own school called Tree House. This will be our third radio show and today's presentation is going to be very specific to what is happening in her school and how it relates to what she and I are going to accomplish together in the future, because we do want to put together a dual language program with Zoo-phonics as the catalyst and the foundation.

What she has created at her school and what her teachers are doing every single day is amazing. As I have said before, have had the privilege to watch them two different times when I have gone over there to train teachers and university students and to observe in her school and to look at it because it's absolutely beautiful, it's amazing.

Just to do a quick recap, Priscilla is showing us clearly how important dual language is and how, instead of treating it by getting another language as a "second language," which might imply not as fluent, or not as proficient, or not as important – that we would think in terms of learning another language as a synonym to native tongue. So as a child learns from a very young age, they're learning a word from Spanish and they're learning a word in English. or whatever the language is.

And then it would be treated more as a synonym or synonyms, plural. I love that concept because it makes it so easy for us to understand basically what the brain does and how easily it shifts between languages. We really don't understand this in America because we don't really, naturally, teach two different languages, we wait far too long, we wait until high school. If you look at Europe and if you look at Asian countries, they learn a second language, they have their language and then they have English because they see English as the economic language, as the communication language of the world, basically based on economics. You look at

somebody, anyone from Europe, they travel so easily and so quickly from country to country and they pick up one, two, three, four languages and they go through them just so easily, they can read, speak, write in them. This is something that we are in the process of analyzing and researching.

Priscilla is going to share with us, not only what her children and teachers are doing but she's also going to talk about the data that she has collected, she has assessed her children, the teachers assess. She has data and it's very interesting because she has two different sets, is that correct? You have children who have had several years and then you have this last one who have had more years starting with the one year old's.

There's a significant difference, so we're definitely going to be talking about that. I want to remind you that the brain of bilingual child – or child who has a dual language, native tongue at home, learning another language in school – the brain is actually larger, heavier and has more proficiency. As Priscilla had mentioned that data, firm research shows that people that have a dual language actually perform at a higher proficiency rate than children without the dual language. So keep that in the forefront of your brain because if you're a parent who has a child, you really want to get a child very young into a second language, it is so imperative.

Priscilla says, "We are raising our children not for today but for tomorrow" and that means we don't think about tomorrow when you have a preschool or you're so busy thinking about today but about that child's future, that child's success and proficiency and wellbeing and self-image are all tied into learning not only just a language but about other cultures expanding one's horizons.

I'm going to turn it over to Priscilla, so that she can describe her school. Again, first of all, the children are just so adorable and so wonderful that I don't get enough of watching them, just as I find it amazing and her teachers are amazing as well. Very passionate and excited about what they're discovering and what they're learning and what they're doing with kids.

Priscilla, please tell us and start with your one year old's. Tell us from the ground up.

**[0:04:51.2] PHP:** Nice to be back. As I said before, I've been a teacher for 24 years and out of that time, I've been a teacher, I've been Head Mistress, I've been Director of work with all

grades. Five years ago, I decided to devote myself to the most important age, the preschool age, and just focus on the dual language. I'm so glad that we found Zoo-phonics in our path because it's made it possible for us to be able to teach literacy and content, at the same time that they're learning how to read in both languages, at the same time.

**[0:05:20.4] CW:** Now, can you explain what you mean about literacy?

**[0:05:23.5] PHP:** We're talking about our final goal, our kindergartens when they come out of Tree House, and I showed you some samples. They're able to read and write paragraphs and understand what they're reading, both languages, English and Spanish. We've even had the experience of some children connecting that phonetical knowledge with the third language that they speak at home.

**[0:05:46.5] CW:** That's amazing.

**[0:05:47.5] PHP:** It's truly amazing and we have the data to back that up, not only from our school but from other schools that have joined into this dual language early intervention program that we've been doing in Dominican Republic.

**[0:05:59.0] CW:** Can you be real specific about the data you have collected because you say you have two different groups, depending on how young the child started with this program?

**[0:06:07.0] PHP:** Not only depending on how young the child started with the program because obviously, the groups that have been at our school since they were one, are performing a lot better than those children that came into our school when they were three or four.

The younger you start has a drastic difference on the results. We have also shown in the results that there is no difference between our children that are from the city that come from families with professional background and middle class economic standing, than those that are for example, in one of our partner schools [0:06:40.0], which are the cane fields inside the island where we have Haitians come in to work the fields and these little children come in only knowing Creole. Through the work of a wonderful Christian ministry that sends teachers over, they're learning English and Spanish at the same time. So you're talking about, three, four year old's, speaking fluently three languages.

**[0:07:04.1] CW:** Again, that's at the poverty level?

**[0:07:06.6] PHP:** Yes.

**[0:07:06.8] CW:** We're talking about –

**[0:07:10.1] PHP:** – at a drastic poverty level. I'm talking about children that come in without clothes, without food, and every morning, they are fed and clothed in school and they receive their classes using Zoo-phonics.

**[0:07:18.8] CW:** Wow, how did you discover them?

**[0:07:21.0] PHP:** Actually, they discovered us. They approached us, they found out what we were doing with the dual language program. Then we joined forces and we have been working together for a few years.

**[0:07:32.0] CW:** You trained their teachers?

**[0:07:33.4] PHP:** Yes, we trained their teachers to be able to do the work with the children in both languages at the same time. They have Dominican teachers speaking to children in Spanish and then the American teachers talking to the children in English.

**[0:07:44.7] CW:** That's amazing. You donated the Zoo-phonics materials to them?

**[0:07:48.2] PHP:** Yes, we donated Zoo-phonics materials and they're doing an absolute great job.

**[0:07:53.2] CW:** That is so exciting. As I've listened to Priscilla talk about this, what she had said is that once these children at the absolute poverty level and we're emphasizing the poverty of Haiti, we all know what they went through with a total devastation of their country. Huge loss of life and homes destroyed and just left with nothing. Yet, these children, because of their

education that they're getting, they are beginning to work on par, again, she said, learning two to three different languages at three and four years old.

**[0:08:31.3] PHP:** It's opening doors for their future.

**[0:08:33.4] CW:** That's incredible. It touches my heart so much because when you think about the advantages that we have in our country in America and we know that we have children that are at the poverty level in America and our heart breaks for that and we try so hard to provide them with education, food and medical care, et cetera.

Even then, we can't touch the poverty that we're seeing in other countries, where the poverty level is really beyond what we really can fathom. Knowing that these children are going to be able to break out of this – it's got to just touch your heart. I remember you sending me the videos and you said you were crying because it just touched your heart so much to see them.

The videos are precious. You have sent us videos that can be seen on the website if you want –

**[0:09:23.5] PHP:** They can also go into Instagram and see Tree House ER where we have pictures of our children using Zoo-phonics and showing what they've learned in the different ages. We also have videos and pictures of our work by the ministry.

**[0:09:35.9] CW:** That's amazing. Okay, now, start with your first graders?

**[0:09:39.4] PHP:** Okay, I'll give you a little idea on how we work with curriculum. Number one, we use the common core standard, so we meet all common core standards to make sure that there are children, again, we live in the Caribbean, can move to any other country and be able to just fit in, to any elementary school they go to, in English in another country or in Spanish.

We also meet our Dominican curriculum standards that are not part of the common core, which are basically the cultural ones, knowing a little bit of our culture and our history. Ho we organize this is we start with Spanish and the younger grades with the one year old's and the children receive literacy and content in Spanish but at the same time, they're learning with the Zoo-phonics animals, phonemic awareness. This is great, we're talking about nonverbal children.

**[0:10:25.7] CW:** That's right, that is something that I want to highlight, is that a one year old has a lot of receptive language but they don't have expressive language. It is very rare for a one year old to speak sentences, we know that they can, but they're few and far between. This is their stage where they are learning, they're pulling in all their information as they're developing vocabulary and syntax and grammar. They're pulling it all in.

They have it inside the brain, they're not able to express it yet it comes in time. You're taking children who are basically nonverbal, maybe they know a word or two inside their brains, they have a lot of understanding. You're really building your foundation on the receptive language and adding to it. What are some activities that you would do? Some Zoo-phonics activities, et cetera?

**[0:11:15.3] PHP:** Well, the Zoo-phonics animals are present with us all of the time. They learn the Zoo-phonics animals' names in English, even though we're speaking Spanish at the moment with them, and we teach them the sounds. The sounds in English and Spanish, the symbol sounds are very common. We only have like five different sounds that we have to explain to the children, and we do this through stories with the animals so that they have fun.

But you can see a one year old in the playground playing with a dice that has the pictures of the different animals on each side and whenever the dice comes out with one of the Zoo-phonics animals, he'll signal and sound that, while he's also looking at the animal that has the shape of the letter.

It just brings them so much joy to play with the animals all around the playground, just hiding the animals around the room, puzzles, it's like their little friends, a fun part of the day and they go with them all day. As a result, you're able to see it, you've seen it yourself. We have 12 month old, 16 month old, 18 month old babies because they're still so young, that don't necessarily speak English and Spanish, that they recognize all the symbols of the alphabet when they see them because they're the same shape as the animal. They can tell you the sound for each one of them.

**[0:12:32.6] CW:** okay, let me just explain for those people who are maybe listening to us today without the background of Zoo-phonics. Zoo-phonics, we teach lower case letters first, the shapes of lower case letters first because 95% of our text is written in lower case letters.

We teach the sounds of those letters first, not letter names. Letter names are so distorting, they do not sound like the letter sounds and we cannot read or spell with using letter names. All you're doing is calling out the letters but you're not spelling with them. Let me just tell you the difference. CAT, cat. They're not the same. That's what we're talking about.

When Priscilla's talking about hiding the animals around the room or the yard, we have our alphabet cards and so on the one side, you have the picture of the animal, in the shape of the lower case letter but there's no black big block letter behind it.

You flip it over and here you have the big, black block letter, lower case, underneath the animal and the animal's sitting on top of it and you can still see the letter. That's that transition. First, we look at the animal and we see Ally Alligator shaped in the lower-case A. You flip it over and you see the animal Ally Alligator sitting literally on top of that lower-case A.

Now we've made the transition to the letter. So, it's picture letter. Merged, we call it merge when it's sitting on top and then again, we'll teach the letter all by itself in time. We want to keep it physical and playful. Every animal has an alliterative name. Every animal has a body signal. When we first started out, when I met Priscilla four years ago, we gave her the Spanish materials, thinking that she would take the Spanish materials at home and utilize them and after about a year or so when she came over here and we did more and more talking, she said, "I'm not using the Spanish materials, I'm using the English materials to teach Spanish and English. It has worked out phenomenally."

Go ahead, keep telling us, what are some fun ideas?

**[0:14:41.2] PHP:** As you were saying in the past, they taught us letter names, could you imagine a poor one year old learning [0:14:46.0] and why, at the same time? When in none of the languages it sounds like that, it just sounds like Jen C Jack. Our children are able to play with these animals, the explanations and the stories are so much fun.

It's out of your seat, it's moving around. It is singing, it is dancing, and we just had to add one more letter to the alphabet in order to make it complete in Spanish, which is "nyo-nyo-yan-du" which for Latin teachers that maybe hear me or bilingual teachers is the ñ, and the children just

love the stories and how the animals connect to one another. So, by the time they're one, our children can identify and recognize all the little animals, their shape and the sound they make.

**[0:15:30.2] CW:** Which is the letter shape.

**[0:15:32.0] PHP:** When they turn two and they go into our toddler's program, these children are able to recognize the initial sound. Again, we are still working in Spanish but you go into a room and you tell them "Can anyone find something that starts with this sound S like Sammy Snake?" And children are able to go around, it doesn't matter which language is their native language, they will go around and show you an object that starts with an S in English or with an S in Spanish.

And we sometimes get it in other languages and they're so confident. They're self-esteem is boosted. They are eager to learn more and to share their experience and you are talking about two year old's going around town, showing mom and dad around the street, "There I see Baba Bear" and sounds "ba-ba-ba" and we train the parents as well so they can work with the children. It is hilarious to see the parents helping their children become literate through the animals.

**[0:16:26.6] CW:** That is exciting, to get parents involved like that. How excited are the parents?

**[0:16:31.6] PHP:** They're super excited and they practice it. They send us home videos and they actually tag us in their posts in Instagram and to see the children out of school just in their house going ahead and playing with their own toys trying to read or write on their own, because they are enjoying it, because it is fun, because they are not making me write this 20 times and repeat it until I memorize it, but because I understand it and I can use it.

**[0:16:57.5] CW:** Which is a good point. I remember when I was first learning and I was an early reader, early speller, but one of the things was to write your alphabet over and over and over.

**[0:17:07.4] PHP:** I remember having to write my name 40 times before saying good morning in pre-school and in cursive thank you.

**[0:17:14.9] CW:** I have a confession to make and I don't think I have even mentioned this to you yet but I mentioned part of it, but I haven't told you today's piece of information. So, when I have seen this in your school or I have seen your videos and I am just in awe, because again, we are going back to the one year old's and the two year old's, it's crazy. Now I am used to two year old's and 18 month old children, 16 month old children, I am used to that because we teach, once they turn 18 months old, when we started it at Safari Learning Academy. That is when we teach the alphabet.

So when we move to our new facility and we had our whole infant center, I put up the cute animal wall borders that have all of those Zoo-phonics animals that go around the room, and I put some other animal pictures in there, and made the room look very cute so that they could look at them and they could identify with them, so that when they went into the toddler program they would already have a visual introduction to it.

Spending this week with you, because we have a two month old, two months to 18 months, as soon as they hit 18 months, they join the toddler program. I thought after listening to you and seeing what I have seen, I was like "No," because I was not going to have them teach Zoo-phonics in there. It was too early, we'll just wait until they're 18 months and going on to the toddler program. So I went into today and again, I didn't mention this to you because we have been so busy.

But I went into the infant program today and I said to the two teachers there who are wonderful by the way, Sandy and Stephanie and Karen, sometimes, and Abby and I said to them, "We need to start Zoo-phonics in here" and she said, "I already did a long time ago." So they had been working. They have been literally teaching the children Zoo-phonics, because when you look at the little guys who were still babes in arms or crawling, they are just having fun just being on the ground doing whatever they are doing.

Finding, playing, that kind of thing. The toddlers, they are going up to the nature wall cards and they're touching them and the wall borders and they're touching them. Stephanie and Sandy have been teaching them Zoo-phonics the signals and sounds. Brand new information today. I am so amazed, so touched, so excited. So here we are, we are already starting our dual language program.

**[0:19:29.5] PHP:** Oh, there you go, I'll have to come visit more.

**[0:19:31.5] CW:** Now they're two years old and three years old I want to know how you –

**[0:19:34.4] PHP:** And they identify the initial sound in both languages. It's awesome and they're so happy about it. They just want to do more.

**[0:19:42.4] CW:** From the videos, I see them doing a lot of smiling, giggling. I was in the classroom, so I saw it firsthand and I saw the teacher go between English and Spanish, while actually teaching the whole lesson in Spanish but using English occasionally. But with your one and two year old's, it was crazy because that was really the first time that I have seen anybody use a Zoo-phonics English program to teach Spanish. I had not seen it yet.

**[0:20:03.5] PHP:** To teach Spanish, yes, and we have very cute stories to explain the difference. Those that speak both languages will understand this one, our explanation for Robby Rabbit, is that Robby Rabbit is such a soft little rabbit and makes this noise "whrrr," but when he hangs out with his cousin Roberto, they get into a car-r-r-eta and they really go all out and "r-r-r-i-a-r" all the way. So children, both the Latins and the others, learn how to roll those R's which are little harder for people and they just have fun just going around the whole school in a pretend carreta and just have fun.

**[0:20:38.3] CW:** Is a carreta a cart?

**[0:20:40.7] PHP:** Like a cart, like a carriage.

**[0:20:41.8] CW:** Okay like a carriage.

**[0:20:43.1] PHP:** Okay, so you can imagine Roberto with his big hat on top and probably eating a taco or something and just having fun with his cousin.

**[0:20:52.9] CW:** That's wonderful. So now we're now to the three year old mark, children have learned –

**[0:20:55.1] PHP:** This is where it gets great.

**[0:20:56.9] CW:** Yeah so your children are – now again, I want to remind people, 40% of Priscilla’s school is Dominican Republic so Spanish is their native tongue. That means 60% are not. They have got – they are either Russian, Chinese, Israeli, the list goes on and on. 14 different languages or more. So that means that is the language that they speak in the home or they hear on the home.

And then they’re learning it, they’re learning Spanish and now, they’re three, they are going to start learning English, but they are going to keep their Spanish. They are going to learn their English and they are going to maintain their language at home. They’re three years old and they have three languages.

**[0:21:36.9] PHP:** And you could see them turn to mom and speak in one language. A three year old turn to dad, speaking another one, and then turn to us and speak in a third language and it is just so natural, they don’t know they’re switching. They just look at you and they understand that is what you want to listen to, and they’ll go ahead and speak fluently and making full sense. I would say that seeing your toddlers in our three year old program is my favorite grade for the whole preschool.

Because it is when they discover they can read and to see the happiness in their face when they discover that by putting the animal sounds together and, as you were saying, going ahead and putting Catina Cat with Ally Alligator and Tim the Tiger and saying “c-a-t” they made a word. They go out of school to try to read the whole world, to try to write a letter to mom, and they’ll do the same with the Spanish because remember we’re only learning the simple sound.

And the sound for Catina Cat is the same one and both. It will sound “K” in both, and they go ahead and read what we in Spanish call simple syllabic sound, which will be words with two syllables. Like ma-ma, which is mom. Children are able to read it and write it and they just learned Zoo-phonics so far. After they feel confident in reading and they are reading all around the room, reading outside the school, reading with their parents in both languages, then we go ahead and introduce capital letters, blends and we start writing with them.

**[0:23:07.4] CW:** What's amazing is, because I think we have always taken pride in Zoo-phonics knowing that our children learn to rewrite and spell so much earlier than traditionally in our country using the traditional capital letter first, letter name first, curriculum. It's been such an interesting for me as an educator of over 45 years to see that the demands of Kindergarten are so stringent. So these children come out of preschool, and in preschool, they want children, the preschool teachers and their belief systems are that children should be playing and socializing.

That academics, they'll do some, but they are uncomfortable. They feel like they're forcing too much information on children, that children need to be children and so they don't really have a tendency to teach a lot of literacy when it comes to ABC learning et cetera. If they do teach the alphabet, it is ABC capital letters normally because that is the tradition. So they don't even do it the Zoo-phonics way, which is so concrete and playful and physical, it makes it so much harder.

So now those kids go to kindergarten and they are absolutely not ready. They are not ready. Furthermore, the demands of common core standards across the nation are so stringent for kindergarten that too many children are failing and this to me is an absolute travesty, because they have to make it up with Saturday school or afternoon school to make up. They need to add more hours of literacy training, you know, phonics for awareness et cetera.

Because they have not learned it easily or sufficiently and they are just not ready for it. So when I listened to Priscilla talk, and again, I have seen it with my own eyes. I have seen their videos, I have seen their still pictures but I have actually been there and spent two weeks with them, I could say "Well yeah, our four year old's know their CVC words," and Priscilla says, "Our three year old's know their CVC words." So, you know, it has given me a shot in the arm just to be maybe a little bit bolder.

And we don't have to necessarily at that time have to – they don't have to be fully responsible for spelling or reading these words, but they sure need that side of [0:25:18.0], that we are actually going to put those letters together maybe at a younger stage is fine. I am going to be trying some of this with our own school and I want to see what the results are. So the one thing that I have noticed with her school and with my school, is that these children are laughing, jumping, giggling. There is no stress.

**[0:25:36.8] PHP:** There is no stress, that is not how it works. There's no repetition or memorization as we used to do as the prior generation. These children are enjoying it and they're going to elementary school with pockets of knowledge, of pride, and most of all self-esteem. They know they are doing great and when they get to kindergarten or first grade that they transfer from the preschool program, or if they do it at home because I have heard of great mothers and grandmothers doing the Zoo-phonics program at home. They arrive and they just have to worry about making friends because the rest is covered for them.

**[0:26:11.3] CW:** Wow that is so amazing and what we noticed is we have many different languages actually at our school. We usually have two or three a year with the hospital **[0:26:20.0]** Regional has brought in so many different families from different countries and they do have a tendency to come our facility, our Safari Learning Academy. What we've noticed is that we just get them into Zoo-phonics immediately. So, we actually teach them the sounds of the English language and they're non-English speakers.

I mean they will come to us absolutely not knowing English and we don't really spend a lot of time. We basically kind of toss them into the classroom and, not literally, but we just expect that they are going to pick it up and they do. They get the Zoo-phonics alphabet so quickly, that's what's interesting, that besides the teacher's wonderful instruction, a lot of it happens during snack time, outdoor playtime. They are talking and I am telling you, our children become English speakers by the summer.

I mean I am thinking of several children that I am just so amazingly surprised, or were pleased, to see them speaking full English.

**[0:27:19.3] PHP:** If I could just say something, I mean this new generation, we are so worried about our health and exercising and working our bodies and staying in shape. I think we have to take care of our brain health and this is the best way to exercise it and give our children a head start for the world.

**[0:27:35.1] CW:** Well we're going to wrap it up here and we, just again, have so much to share. This is one of our exciting moments because we are in the process of coming up with something that the world has not seen yet. So I am really excited. But I want to, after what Priscilla just said, I want to remind anyone over a certain age that they state that if you learn a language in

your elder years, that you actually protect your brain. You know me, I have been saying for a long time, keep your body moving, stay young.

So if you have any questions, you can email me at [char@safarilearning.com](mailto:char@safarilearning.com) [char@zoophonics.com](mailto:char@zoophonics.com), you can call our 800 number, 800-622-8104, or you call our local number, 536-4926, and that is a 209 area code. We love to hear from you. Catch us on Instagram or Facebook. Bye-bye.

[OUTRO]

**[0:28:27.0] ANNOUNCER:** That was Ed. Talks with Dr. Char. You've been listening on KAAD-LP Radio, live on 103.5 FM, or streaming online at [kaad-lp.org](http://kaad-lp.org). If you would like to have Dr. Char answer any of your questions, please e-mail your question to [dr\\_char@zoophonics.com](mailto:dr_char@zoophonics.com). Thanks for listening and stay tuned for what's next on KAAD-LP Radio.

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