

Barbara Dowling: Let's listen to Dr. Tabors' suggestions for engaging young dual language learners in science conversations.

[Video begins] Dr. Tabors: Well, I think having science conversations with second language learners is a -- a wonderful situation. I think it's going to, again, matter that a teacher takes the time to think about how this is going to be working in her classroom. What they need to be thinking about is what can these children, in particular individual children or language-grouped children, take away from a particular lesson? There are a lot of different options.

If you're in the situation where someone could come in and give the lesson initially, or give -- or having the conversation initially, or begin an investigation in the child's home language, this is a wonderful place to start, because what we're building is concepts. It's not a question of them immediately knowing what's being talked about in English. What you want them to understand is what's going on. And that is best expressed in the child's home language if that can be arranged -- not always possible.

But if there are the resources to go that way, that's a wonderful place to start. Then having the concepts, the children can pick up on the English language vocabulary, and that will be a wonderful lead-in to their learning more vocabulary in English.

A second thing you can do is you can decide whether or not you want to group children either in a mixed group, some English speakers and some English language learners, or if you want to tailor your presentation or your work with children or your science talk to a group of children who all speak the same first language, or who are all second language learners so that you can be very careful about the language that's used in that context. And then, again, bring along the vocabulary as you feel the children are prepared and ready to use it.

It takes more effort, takes some -- a lot more planning. But it is, again, a wonderful situation because the context for talk is right there in front of the children. And that's how second language learners learn best, is to know what it is you're talking about and to be able to make guesses about what the words that they're hearing actually mean. [Video ends]

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