



Griot Moon Presents:

A Parent's Guide to Bilingual Reading

Tips, strategies, and milestones for raising a bilingual reader

Written by Pawa Seyni

Introduction

Welcome to the Journey!

Raising a bilingual child is one of the greatest gifts you can give them. It opens doors to new cultures, sharpens cognitive skills, and creates deep family connections.

But let's be honest: it can also feel overwhelming. You might wonder, 'Am I doing it right?' or 'What if they mix up the languages?'

Take a deep breath. You are doing great. This guide is designed to give you practical, stress-free strategies to make bilingual reading a natural and joyful part of your daily routine.

The Golden Rule: Consistency over Perfection

Children learn languages through exposure and need. They don't need you to speak perfectly; they need you to speak consistently. Even 15 minutes of dedicated reading in the target language every day makes a massive difference over a year.

■ Pro Tip:

Don't treat reading like a test. If your child doesn't want to repeat a word, don't force it. The goal is to make reading a cozy, positive experience they look forward to.

Proven Strategies

Top 3 Bilingual Reading Strategies

Every family is different. Choose the strategy that best fits your household dynamic:

- One Parent, One Language (OPOL): Parent A speaks only English, Parent B speaks only Spanish. This is highly effective because the child clearly associates a specific language with a specific person.
- Minority Language at Home (ML@H): Both parents speak the minority language (e.g., Spanish) at home, knowing the child will learn the majority language (e.g., English) at school and in the community.
- Time and Place (T&P): Designating specific times for specific languages. For example, 'Dinner time is Spanish time' or 'Bedtime stories are always in French.'

How to Read a Bilingual Book

- Read the whole story in one language first, then the other. Switching back and forth on every sentence can disrupt the flow of the story.
- Point to the pictures, not just the words. Visual context is how children map new vocabulary to concepts.

■ Pro Tip:

If your child asks a question in English while you are reading in Spanish, answer them in Spanish. This gently reinforces the language boundary.

Milestones & Expectations

What to Expect: Age by Age

Language acquisition is a marathon, not a sprint. Here is a rough guide to bilingual milestones:

- Ages 0-2 (The Sponge Phase): They are absorbing sounds. Focus on songs, rhymes, and high-contrast board books. They understand far more than they can say.
- Ages 2-4 (The Mixing Phase): It is completely normal for them to mix languages in the same sentence (e.g., 'Look at the perro!'). This is called code-switching and is a sign of high intelligence, not confusion.
- Ages 4-6 (The Separation Phase): They begin to clearly separate the languages depending on who they are speaking to. They will start showing a preference for the 'easier' or majority language.
- Ages 6-8 (The Reading Phase): They begin to decode written words. Start with phonics in their dominant language, then introduce reading in the second language once the foundation is set.

■ Pro Tip:

Never punish or correct code-switching harshly. Simply model the correct sentence back to them: 'Yes, look at the big dog!'

Ready for More?

Bring the magic of bilingual reading home.

Explore My Bilingual Books

Available in English, Spanish, and French

Visit: griotmoon.com/books

Thank you for letting me be part of your family's journey.

Pawa Seyni