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BRIEF: Select Findings from the Migrant and Seasonal  
Head Start Study 2017

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## Cultural Items and Language Use (CILU) Checklist



# **SELECT FINDINGS FROM THE MIGRANT AND SEASONAL HEAD START STUDY 2017: CULTURAL ITEMS AND LANGUAGE USE (CILU) CHECKLIST**

**OPRE Report 2020-18**

**January 2020**

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## Introduction

This brief includes a snapshot of how language and cultural items are used in Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs.

Specifically, this brief presents select findings from the *Cultural Items and Language Use Checklist* (“CILU Checklist”). The *CILU Checklist* is an observation measure that was completed during a 2-3 hour visit to MSHS classrooms as part of the 2017 MSHS Study. The study team designed this measure to better understand children’s language and cultural experiences.

Understanding how language and cultural items are used in MSHS classrooms may inform classroom instruction and how it can be tailored for children of varying age levels served by MSHS programs—infants/younger toddlers, older toddlers, and preschoolers.

These findings may be helpful to MSHS programs to consider as they identify the best ways to create classrooms that incorporate the languages and cultures of MSHS children and their families.

## Key Findings



**Book Reading:** Staff were observed reading to children in most classrooms during the observation. Staff primarily read books written in Spanish and English. Within 81% of infant/younger toddler classrooms, teachers were observed reading to children. Within these classrooms, an average of 2.9 books were read. In 74% of older toddler classrooms, teachers were observed reading to children. In these classrooms, an average of 2.2 books were read. Within 83% of preschool classrooms, teachers were observed reading to children. In these classrooms, an average of 2.2 books were read.



**Singing:** The average number of songs sung during the observation ranged from five songs (in preschool classrooms) to nine songs (in infant/younger toddler classrooms). Spanish and English were frequently used for singing during the observation.



**Language Use:** Lead teachers often used some combination of English and Spanish in the classroom (27% of infant/younger toddler classrooms, 48% of older toddler classrooms, and 76% of preschool classrooms). It was less common for lead teachers to use English only (13% of infant/younger toddler and preschool classrooms, 27% of older toddler classrooms, and 13% for preschool classrooms).



**Cultural Items:** A variety of cultural items were present and used in classrooms during the observation. Multilingual books were the most likely items to be present and used. Specifically, multilingual books were present in all classrooms and were used in about three quarters of classrooms. The least commonly used cultural items in infant/younger toddler classrooms were home language labels (12%). The least commonly used cultural items in older toddler and preschool classrooms were cultural displays (13% and 5%, respectively).



## About Migrant and Seasonal Head Start

Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (MSHS) programs provide child development, family support, and family engagement services to young children and their migrant and seasonal farmworker families.

Migrant or seasonal farmworker families are those engaged in year-round or seasonal agricultural labor who may have changed their residence in the preceding two-year period. MSHS programs offer voluntary services to children from birth until they reach the age of mandatory school attendance.

Just like other Head Start programs, MSHS programs offer access to medical and dental

care, nutritional services, mental health services and other community resources. MSHS programs are designed to meet the unique needs of migrant and seasonally working families. MSHS programs usually provide bilingual services and sometimes operate in non-standard hours or in varying locations throughout the agricultural season.

MSHS programs operate in 38 states and are administered by the Regional Office for Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (Region XII), located in Washington, D.C within the Office of Head Start, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services.

## About the Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study 2017

The Migrant and Seasonal Head Start Study 2017 provides a national picture of MSHS programs, centers, families, and children. The MSHS Study 2017 was designed through extensive engagement and input from the MSHS community to better understand:

- Characteristics of MSHS programs, centers, staff, families, and children;
- Services that MSHS provides;
- Instructional practices in MSHS classrooms; and,
- MSHS supports for child, parent, and family well-being.

The MSHS Study 2017 included 122 classrooms that were located within 50 centers of different sizes and from different geographic regions. Of the 122 classrooms, 42 classrooms

served predominantly infants and younger toddlers (0-23 months), 39 classrooms served predominantly older toddlers (24-35 months), and 41 classrooms served predominantly preschoolers (36 months and older). Results from the MSHS Study are weighted to be representative of the MSHS population in 2017.

This brief highlights selected MSHS Study 2017 findings based on data collected using the *CILU Checklist* during classroom observations. For additional findings see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).



## The Importance of Home Language Use and Cultural Items

MSHS children and families have diverse cultural and language backgrounds. One way MSHS programs support children and families is by using English and their home languages in the classroom. This approach facilitates English language acquisition while fostering continued learning in the home language. MSHS

programs also include artifacts and practices from their families' home cultures. Inclusive cultural practices help build trust, pride, and confidence that may support healthy development and well-being.<sup>i</sup>

### About the *CILU Checklist* and Language Use Checklist

The *CILU Checklist* is an observation measure designed to better understand children's language and cultural experiences in MSHS.<sup>ii</sup> It captures information on:

- **Shared Book Reading and Singing** – including whether shared reading or singing occurred during the observation; the language of books, reading, and singing; and, the setting in which activities occurred (whole class, small group [≤4 infants, ≤5 toddlers, 5-8 preschoolers], or 1-on-1);
- **Languages Used** – including which languages staff used for instructional and non-instructional purposes, by setting (whole class, small group, or 1-on-1); and
- **Cultural Items** – including the presence, number, and use of items in the classroom that represent cultures of MSHS children and families. Examples include: books about families' home cultures or about agricultural work; home language labels; cultural displays featuring items from families' home cultures (e.g., a zarape or a huipil dress); home music or instruments; cultural food or pretend food; toys related to home culture or to agricultural work (e.g., baleros, tractors,

harvest baskets); and multicultural dolls or puppets.<sup>1</sup>

To develop the *CILU Checklist*, the MSHS Study team adapted the 2015 American Indian and Alaska Native Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey (FACES) Study Cultural Items and Practices Questions.<sup>iii</sup> This measure was adapted to the MSHS cultural and linguistic context. For example, the *CILU Checklist* includes Spanish and English, but also indigenous Mexican languages and Haitian Creole. Cultural items were also adapted to reflect Hispanic culture and agricultural work.

After finalizing the *CILU Checklist*, the study team recruited field staff to observe in MSHS classrooms. All field staff were bilingual in English and Spanish to ensure that they would have the linguistic skills necessary to complete the measure.

Prior to observing classrooms, all field staff attended an initial pre-training webinar and an in-person training. During this time, field staff received in-depth training on the *CILU*

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<sup>1</sup> The *CILU Checklist* was used in all classrooms that participated in the MSHS Study. The length of the observations was longer in preschool classrooms (2.5-3 hours) than in infant/younger toddler and older toddler classrooms (2 hours each).

*Checklist*, which included reviewing definitions, video demonstrations, and scoring practice. Field staff then practiced administering the *CILU Checklist* in bilingual classrooms. Trainers and field staff each rated classrooms using the *CILU Checklist* during the practice sessions. Trainers then reviewed the codes with field staff and provided detailed feedback on any errors. Only those field staff who demonstrated mastery of the measure were hired for the study.

Several quality assurance checks were implemented once data collection began. For example, trainers supervised field staff on their first MSHS center site visit using the same rating rubrics used in the training. This provided additional assurance that field staff were administering the *CILU Checklist* correctly. It also provided another opportunity for the trainers to troubleshoot and provide constructive feedback to field staff. Following

### **How Can the *CILU Checklist* Be Used?**

MSHS programs can use the *CILU Checklist* to observe their own classrooms and note information about book reading, singing, language use and cultural items.

They can then compare their local data to a nationally representative sample of data to see if the book reading, singing, language use and cultural items that they are observing in their classrooms is similar to or different from MSHS classrooms nationally.

The measure can also provide starting points for discussion about the ways that MSHS children are exposed to different languages and cultural items in the classroom.

this initial visit, trainers provided ongoing guidance to field staff as questions arose about the *CILU Checklist*.

In this brief, we present information on the number and language of books that MSHS staff read to children, the number and language of songs that staff sung to children, the instructional language used by lead teachers in whole class settings, and the presence and use of cultural items. Other data from the *CILU Checklist* that are not presented here include more detailed information on 1) book reading during activity settings (i.e., in addition to whole class settings the *CILU Checklist* captures information about small group and 1-on-1 settings), by type of staff (lead teacher, assistant teacher, or other adult) and the language in which the book was read; 2) songs sung by activity setting and by type of staff; and 3) non-instructional language use by type of staff.

Possible discussion questions are:

- How do you or will you implement language and culture into your program and classrooms?
- How can you share information based on your own program and classrooms with your community?

For more information about the *CILU Checklist* see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#). To download a copy of the *CILU Checklist* see the MSHS Study 2017 study page on the [ICPSR website](#).

## Organization of this Brief

The remainder of this brief is organized around four key questions about MSHS classrooms:



(1) How many **books** in different languages were read?



(2) How many **songs** were sung in different languages?



(3) What **languages** did lead teachers use in the classroom?



(4) What **cultural items** were present and/or used?

Findings are presented separately for three age groups:



Infant/Younger Toddler Classrooms (0 — 23 Months)



Older Toddler Classrooms (24 — 35 Months)



Preschool Classrooms (36 Months and Older)

It is important to note that some classrooms in the MSHS Study were mixed-age classrooms. For data collection purposes, classrooms were categorized as infant/younger toddler, older toddler, or preschool classrooms based on the age of the majority of children in the classroom.

Results presented in the following sections are weighted so that they are representative of the MSHS population in 2017.



## Infant/Younger Toddler Classrooms (0 — 23 Months)

This section presents findings for infant/younger toddler classrooms only (0 – 23 months) from the *CILU Checklist* observation measure. Additional findings from the *CILU Checklist* are available in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).<sup>2</sup>



### How many books were read in different languages?

During the two-hour observation, staff in infant/younger toddler classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed reading books written in different languages.<sup>3</sup>

Staff in <b>81%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>any language</b> .	Staff in <b>33%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>Spanish</b> book.	Staff in <b>55%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>English</b> book.	Staff in <b>14%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>bilingual Spanish/English</b> book.	Staff in <b>5%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>another language</b> .
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>2.9 books</b> written in <b>any language</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>3.0 Spanish</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>2.3 English</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.4 bilingual Spanish/English</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.0 book</b> written in <b>another language</b> .

<sup>2</sup> Findings for infant/younger toddler classrooms can be found in the following tables: for book reading, see table B11; for singing, see tables B13-14; for language use, see tables B18-20; and, for cultural items, see tables B16-17.

<sup>3</sup> The *CILU Checklist* captures the number of books read by the written language of the book (reported here) and by the language staff used to read the book. For more information on the languages in which books were read, see table B11 in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).





## Infant/Younger Toddler Classrooms (0 — 23 Months)



### How many songs were sung in different languages?

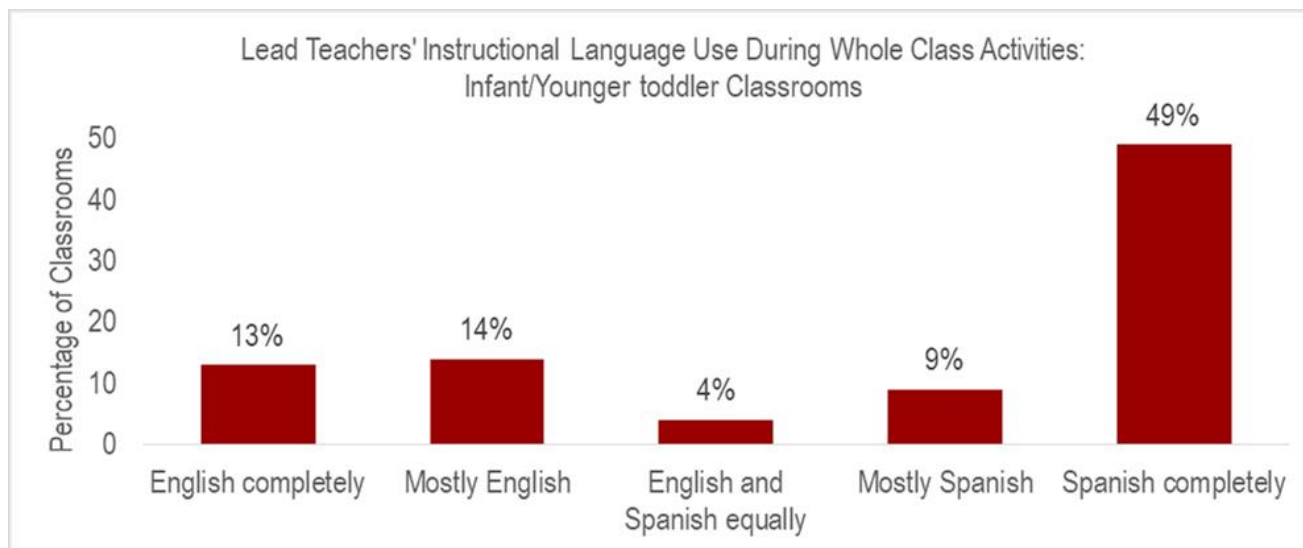
During the two-hour observation, staff in infant/younger toddler classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed singing songs in different languages.

Staff were observed singing, on average, <b>9.4 songs</b> in infant/younger toddler classrooms.	Staff in <b>84%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed <b>singing songs in Spanish</b> .	Staff in <b>82%</b> of infant/younger toddler classrooms were observed <b>singing songs in English</b> .
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### What languages did lead teachers use in the classroom?

During the two-hour observation, in about half (49%) of the infant/younger toddler classrooms, lead teachers used Spanish completely. In over a quarter of classrooms, lead teachers used some combination of English and Spanish. Specifically, in 9% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly Spanish (with some English), in 4% of classrooms, lead teachers used English and Spanish equally, in 14% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly English (with some Spanish), and in 13% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly English (with some Spanish). In just 13% of classrooms, lead teachers used English completely.<sup>4</sup>



This graph presents information on lead teachers' instructional language use in whole class settings. Lead teachers' language use patterns were similar for small group and 1-on-1 settings, as well as for non-instructional language use.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Language use was sometimes coded as "not observed." In infant/younger toddler classrooms, "not observed" rates were highest for whole class (19%) and small group (15%) activities, presumably because most observed interactions occurred in 1-on-1 settings (where the "not observed" rate was about 4%).

<sup>5</sup> The *CILU Checklist* captures language use in whole class, small group, and 1-on-1 settings. It also captures both instructional and non-instructional language use. For more information on these findings see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).

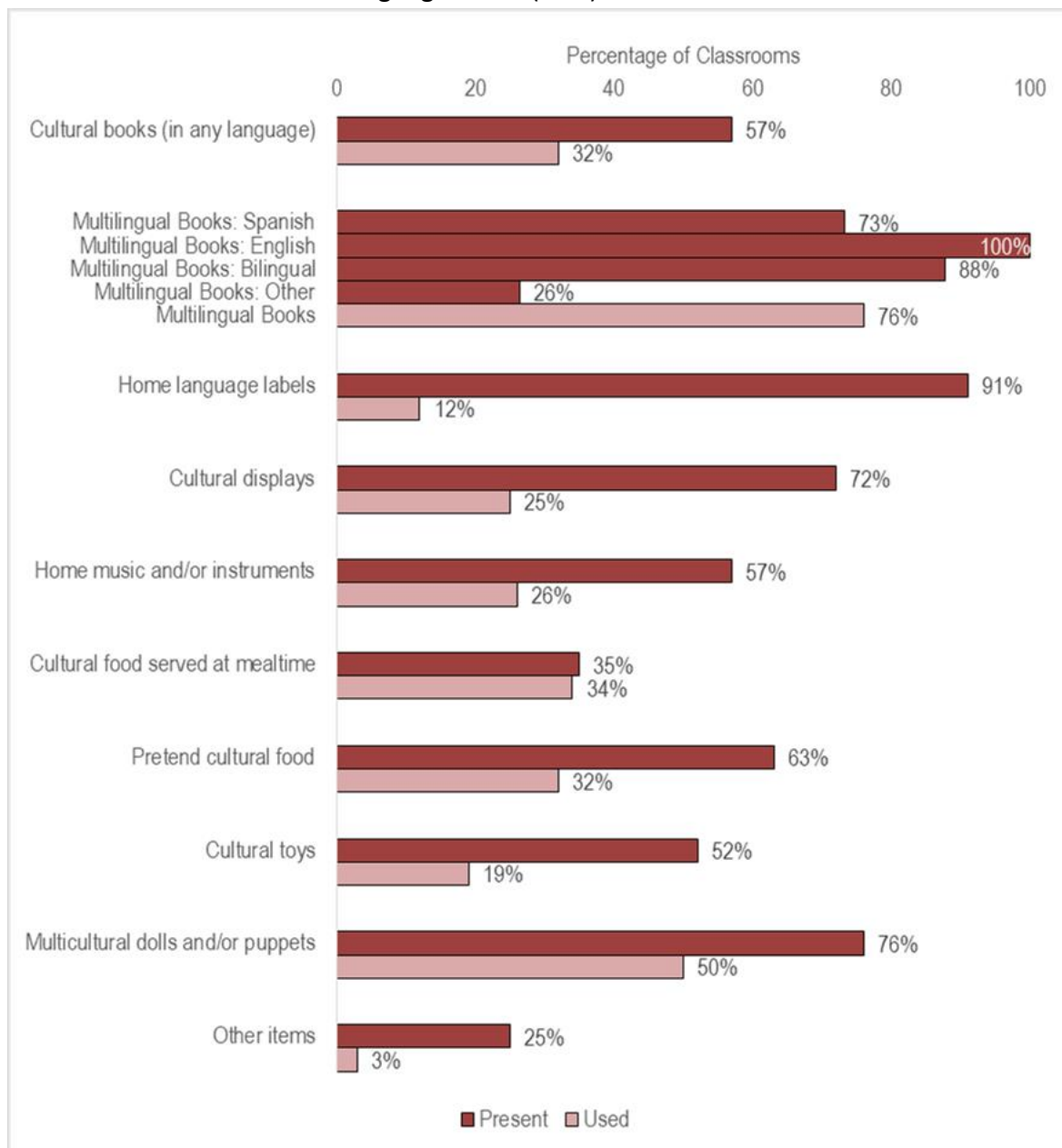


## Infant/Younger Toddler Classrooms (0 — 23 Months)



### What cultural items were present and/or used?

The cultural items that were **most** commonly **present** in infant/younger toddler classrooms during the observation were multilingual books and home language labels. The **most** commonly **used** cultural items in infant/younger toddler classrooms during the observation were multilingual books (76%) and multicultural dolls and/or puppets (50%). The cultural item that was **least** commonly **present** in infant/younger toddler classrooms during the observation was cultural food served at mealtime (35%). The **least** commonly **used** cultural items in infant/younger toddler classrooms during the observation were home language labels (12%).



Notes: Percentages for the presence of the four types of multilingual books do not add to 100% because classrooms could have multiple types of multilingual books. For definitions and examples of each cultural item, see the section above, "About the *Cultural Items and Language Use Checklist*."



## Older Toddler Classrooms (24 — 35 Months)

This section presents findings for older toddler classrooms (24 – 35 months) from the *CILU Checklist* observation measure. Additional findings from the *CILU Checklist* are available in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).<sup>6</sup>



### How many books in different languages were read?

During the two-hour observation, staff in older toddler classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed reading books written in different languages.<sup>7</sup>

Staff in <b>74%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>any language</b> .	Staff in <b>21%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>Spanish</b> book.	Staff in <b>49%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>English</b> book.	Staff in <b>18%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>bilingual Spanish/English</b> book.	Staff in <b>0%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>another language</b> .
↓	↓	↓	↓	↓
In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>2.2 books</b> written in <b>any language</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.5 Spanish</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>2.1 English</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.6 bilingual Spanish/English</b> books.	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>0 books</b> written in <b>another language</b> .

<sup>6</sup> Findings for older toddler classrooms can be found in the following tables: for book reading, see table B22; for singing, see tables B24-25; for language use, see tables B29-31; and, for cultural items, see tables B27-28.

<sup>7</sup> The *CILU Checklist* captures language use in whole class, small group, and 1-on-1 settings. It also captures both instructional and non-instructional language use. For more information on the languages in which books were read, see table B22 in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).



## Older Toddler Classrooms (24 — 35 Months)



### How many songs were sung in different languages?

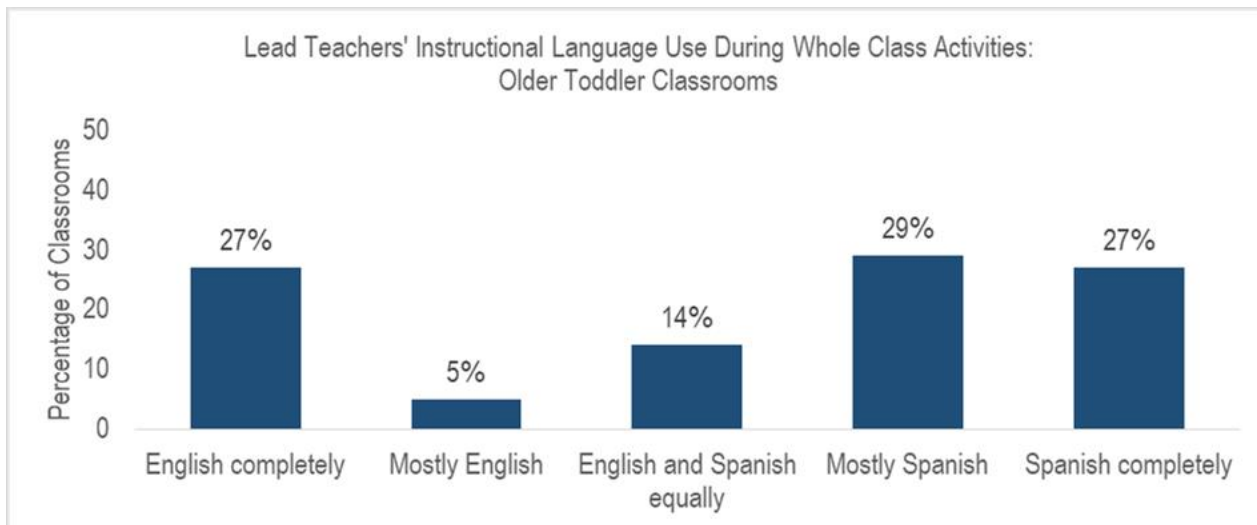
During the two-hour observation, staff in older toddler classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed singing songs in different languages.

Staff were observed singing, on average, <b>7.6 songs</b> in older toddler classrooms.	Staff in <b>82%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed <b>singing songs in Spanish</b> .	Staff in <b>88%</b> of older toddler classrooms were observed <b>singing songs in English</b> .
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### What languages did lead teachers use in the classroom?

During the two-hour observation, in almost half (48%) of the older toddler classrooms, lead teachers used some combination of English and Spanish. Specifically, in 5% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly English (with some Spanish), in 14% of classrooms, lead teachers used English and Spanish equally, and in 29% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly Spanish (with some English). Additionally, in about one quarter of classrooms, lead teachers used English completely (27%) and about in one quarter of classrooms, lead teachers used Spanish completely (27%).<sup>8</sup>



This graph presents information on lead teachers' instructional language use in whole class settings. Lead teachers' language use patterns were similar for small group and 1-on-1 settings, as well as for non-instructional language use.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Language use was sometimes coded as "not observed." For older toddler classrooms, "not observed" rates were highest for 1-on-1 activities (9%), presumably because most observed interactions occurred in small group and whole class settings (where "not observed" rates were about 1%).

<sup>9</sup> The *CILU Checklist* captures language use in whole class, small group, and 1-on-1 settings. It also captures both instructional and non-instructional language use. For more information on these findings see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).



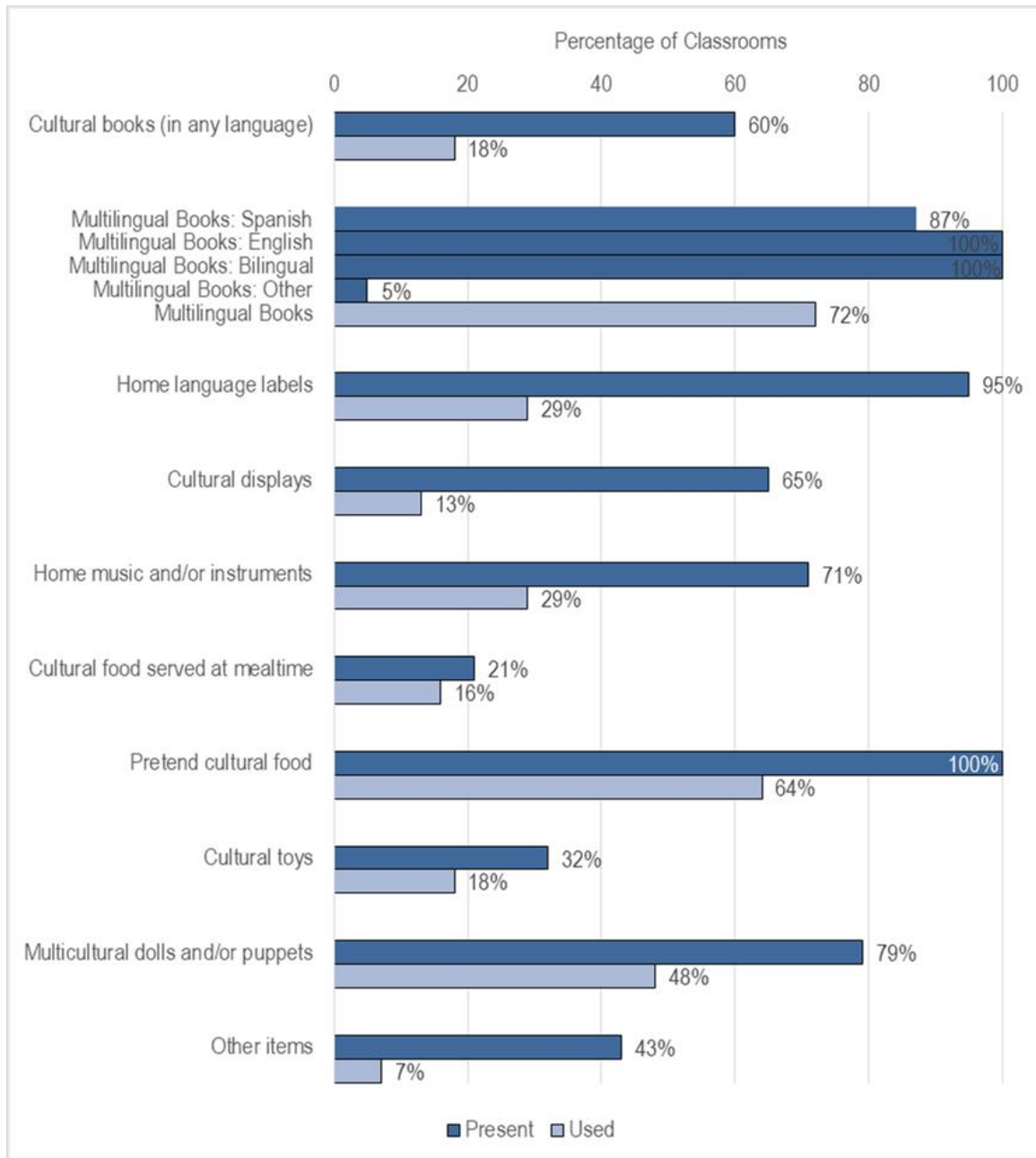


## Older Toddler Classrooms (24 — 35 Months)



### What cultural items were present and/or used?

The cultural items that were **most** commonly **present** and **used** in older toddler classrooms were multilingual books and pretend cultural food. The cultural items that were **least** commonly **present** in older toddler classrooms during the observation were multilingual books in languages other than English or Spanish (5%). The **least** commonly **used** cultural items in older toddler classrooms during the observation were cultural displays (13%).



Notes: Percentages for the presence of the four types of multilingual books do not add to 100% because classrooms could have multiple types of multilingual books. For definitions and examples of each cultural item, see the section above, "About the *Cultural Items and Language Use Checklist*."






## Preschool Classrooms (36 Months and Older)

This section presents findings for preschool classrooms only (36 months and older) from the *CILU Checklist* observation measure. Additional findings from the *CILU Checklist* are available in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).<sup>10</sup>



### How many books in different languages were read?

During the observation (2.5 to 3 hours), staff in preschool classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed reading books written in different languages.<sup>11</sup>

Staff in <b>83%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>any language</b> .	Staff in <b>34%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>Spanish</b> book.	Staff in <b>59%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>English</b> book.	Staff in <b>17%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed reading at least one <b>bilingual Spanish/English</b> book.	Staff in <b>5%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed reading at least one book written in <b>another language</b> .
				
In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>2.2 books</b> written in <b>any language</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.8 Spanish books</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.8 English books</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.1 bilingual Spanish/English books</b> .	In these classrooms, staff were observed reading an average of <b>1.0 book</b> written in <b>another language</b> .

<sup>10</sup> Findings for preschool classrooms can be found in the following tables: for book reading, see table B33; for singing, see tables B35-36; for language use, see tables B40-42; and, for cultural items, see tables B38-39.

<sup>11</sup>The *CILU Checklist* captures language use in whole class, small group, and 1-on-1 settings. It also captures both instructional and non-instructional language use. For more information on the languages in which books were read, see table B33 in the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).



## Preschool Classrooms (36 Months and Older)



### How many songs were sung in different languages during the observation?

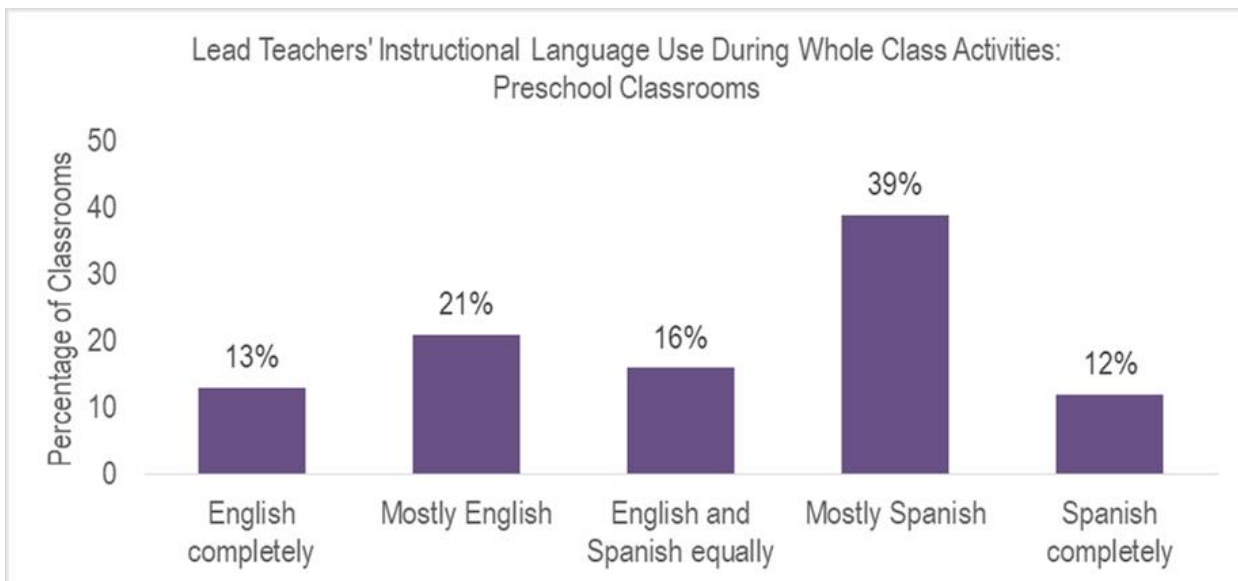
During the observation (2.5 to 3 hours), staff in preschool classrooms (i.e., lead teachers, assistant teachers and other adults) were observed singing songs in different languages.

Staff were observed singing, on average, <b>4.8 songs</b> in preschool classrooms.	Staff in <b>66%</b> of preschool classrooms <b>were observed singing songs in Spanish.</b>	Staff in <b>72%</b> of preschool classrooms were observed <b>singing songs in English.</b>
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### What languages did lead teachers use in the classroom?

During the observation (2.5 to 3 hours), in most preschool classrooms (76%), lead teachers used some combination of English and Spanish. Specifically, in 21% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly English (with some Spanish), in 16% of classrooms, lead teachers used English and Spanish equally, and in 39% of classrooms, lead teachers used mostly Spanish (with some English). In just 13% of classrooms, lead teachers used English completely and in just 12% of classrooms, lead teachers used Spanish completely.<sup>12</sup>



This graph presents information on lead teachers' instructional language use in whole class settings. Lead teachers' language use patterns were similar for small group and 1-on-1 settings, as well as for non-instructional language use.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Language use was sometimes coded as "not observed." For preschool classrooms, "not observed" rates were highest for 1-on-1 activities (about 7%), presumably because most observed interactions occurred in small group and whole class settings (where "not observed" rates were 0%).

<sup>13</sup> The *CILU Checklist* captures language use in whole class, small group, and 1-on-1 settings. It also captures both instructional and non-instructional language use. For more information on these findings see the [MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables](#).

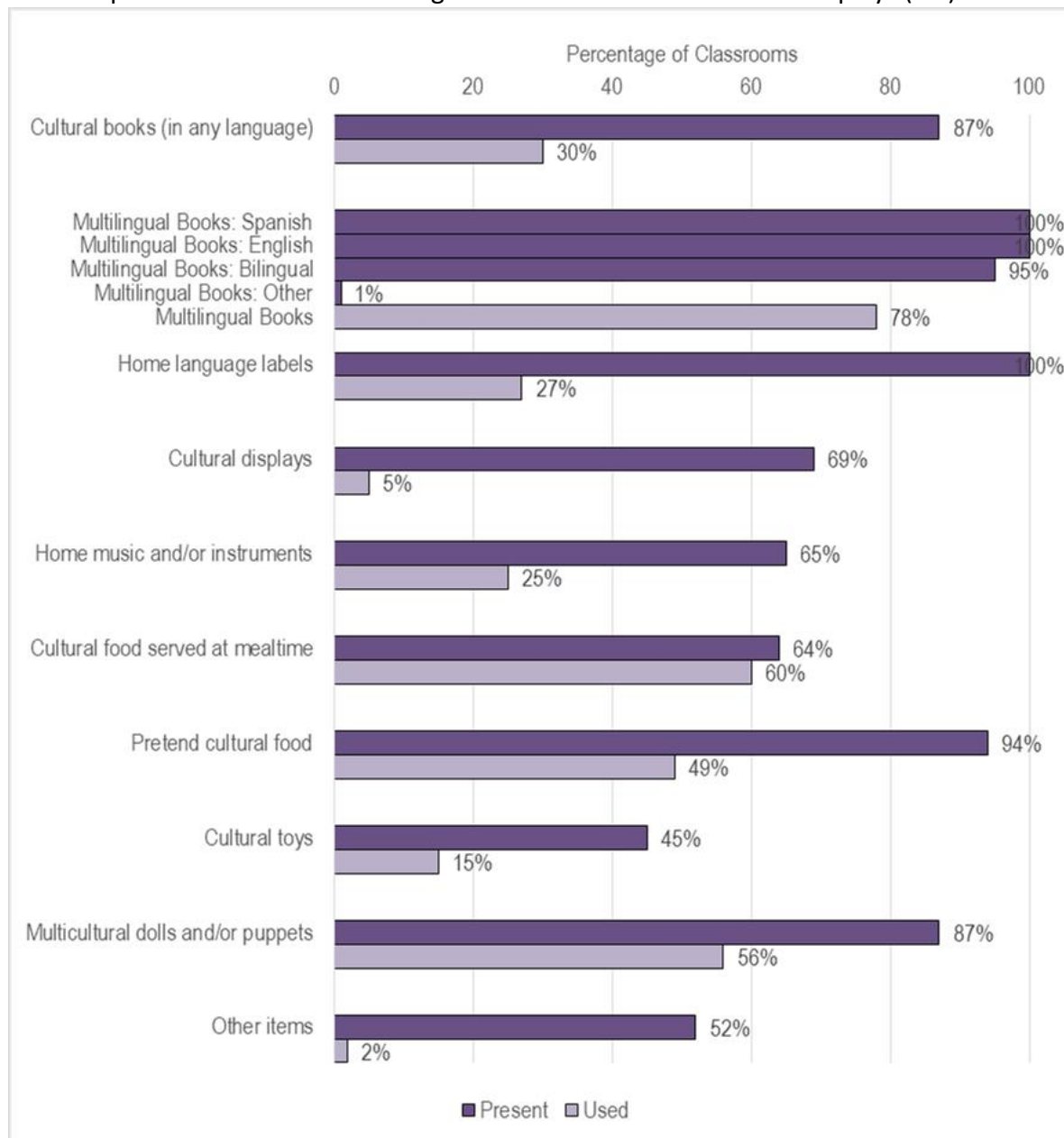


## Preschool Classrooms (36 Months and Older)



### What cultural items were present and/or used?

The cultural items that were **most** commonly **present** in preschool classrooms were multilingual books in Spanish (100%) and English (100%), as well as home language labels (100%). The **most** commonly **used** cultural items in preschool classrooms were multilingual books (78%). The cultural items that were **least** commonly **present** in preschool classrooms during the observation were multilingual books in languages other than English or Spanish (1%). The **least** commonly **used** cultural items in preschool classrooms during the observation were cultural displays (5%).



Notes: Percentages for the presence of the four types of multilingual books do not add to 100% because classrooms could have multiple types of multilingual books. For definitions and examples of each cultural item, see the section above, "About the *Cultural Items and Language Use Checklist*."





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For additional information about the study please visit:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-study>

For additional findings from the MSHS Study please see the *MSHS Study 2017 Data Tables*:

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/resource/migrant-and-seasonal-head-start-study-2017-data-tables>

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