



# Children's Literature in Critical Contexts of Displacement

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## Rationale

Many children who have experienced displacement will have a Home Language which may not be used or recognised in educational settings. Dual language picturebooks are picturebooks which have two languages within the text and they can be used to draw on and build the linguistic repertoire of all children. There are 3 kinds of dual language picturebooks:

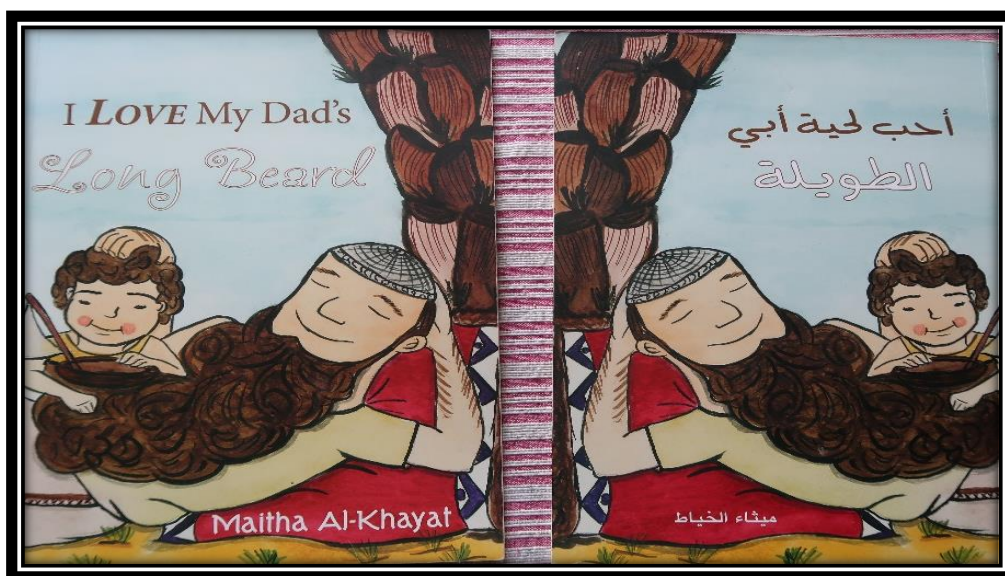
- Interlingual picturebooks in which the story is told in one language, with occasional words from a second language woven into the text and dialogue.
- Bilingual picturebooks in which the story is told completely in two languages. These texts in each language may be placed on the same page, facing pages, or in separate sections of the picturebook.
- Dual version in which the book is published in separate editions, each with a different language, so there are two separate versions with identical design and illustrations. However when the book is in a language where the print runs from right to left the illustrations are often flipped.
- All of these forms of dual language picturebooks have a place in educational settings to recognise and draw on the linguistic knowledge of multilingual children. They enable children to play with language and be exposed to linguistic diversity. They act to give status to languages which may often not be recognised, and ensure speakers of the dominant language do not have a false sense of language superiority. Dual language picturebooks are important in all educational settings even when not all children or teachers know the languages in the books. They are both a tool for bilingual development and for language awareness.

## Advice for mediators

- Be aware of the range of languages spoken in the homes of the children you are working with to ensure your collection includes books in a range of languages reflecting your local community.
- Invite children and/or family members to share their home language by reading or sharing in the reading of dual language picturebooks.
- Give children time to browse the books on their own and to select a favourite book to share with others.
- With interlingual picturebooks encourage children to guess the meanings of unfamiliar words and phrases before you start a read aloud, and then to adjust their guesses as they listen to and view the story.
- In bilingual picturebooks, experiment with the order in which the languages are read and ask the children if they feel any different when they hear one language read before the other.
- Encourage children to ask questions about the languages in the picturebooks

- What sounds are used?
- Why did authors choose to use the languages they did?
- What writing systems are used?
- Are some words similar to the language of instruction?
- Where are different languages spoken on a world map?
- Copy and enlarge phrases and words from the books which could be used in the educational setting. Put them up on walls.
- In dual language books where the images are flipped ask questions about the images.
- Would the meanings be the same without flipping the images?

This photograph shows *I love my Father's Long Beard* by Maitha Al Khayat which is an example of a dual language picturebook where the images have been flipped for the English addition.



- Encourage children to create their own dual language picturebooks to share with other children. They can also work in pairs who have fluency in different languages.

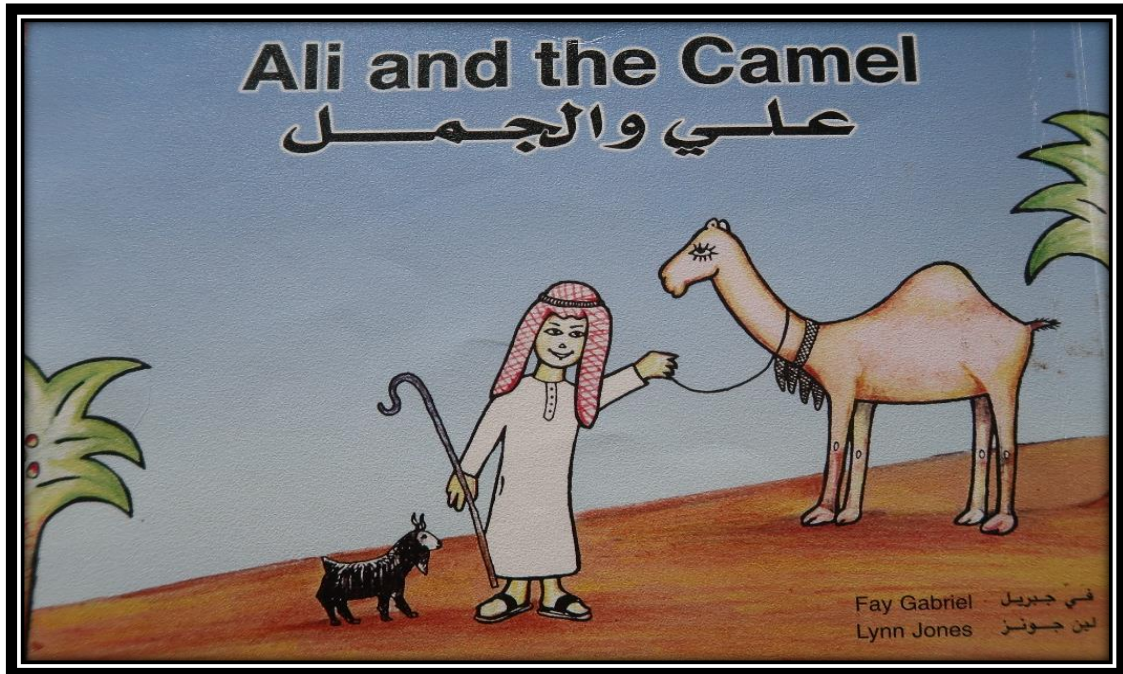
### Responses from Mediators

The following example is from Susanne, Lavinia and Julie who were involved in mediating the multiple meanings to be made from Arabic picturebooks by a multilingual class of children learning English. The use of Arabic books allowed the children who spoke Arabic to create dual language texts for their classmates to read. They drew upon online resources such as Google Translate and discussed the stories in English. Towards the end of the activities the children requested that the mediators brought along some dual language picturebooks that privileged Russian, Mandarin and Farsi. This meant every child was able to play the role of expert and experiment with the order of languages used to hear and view the stories.

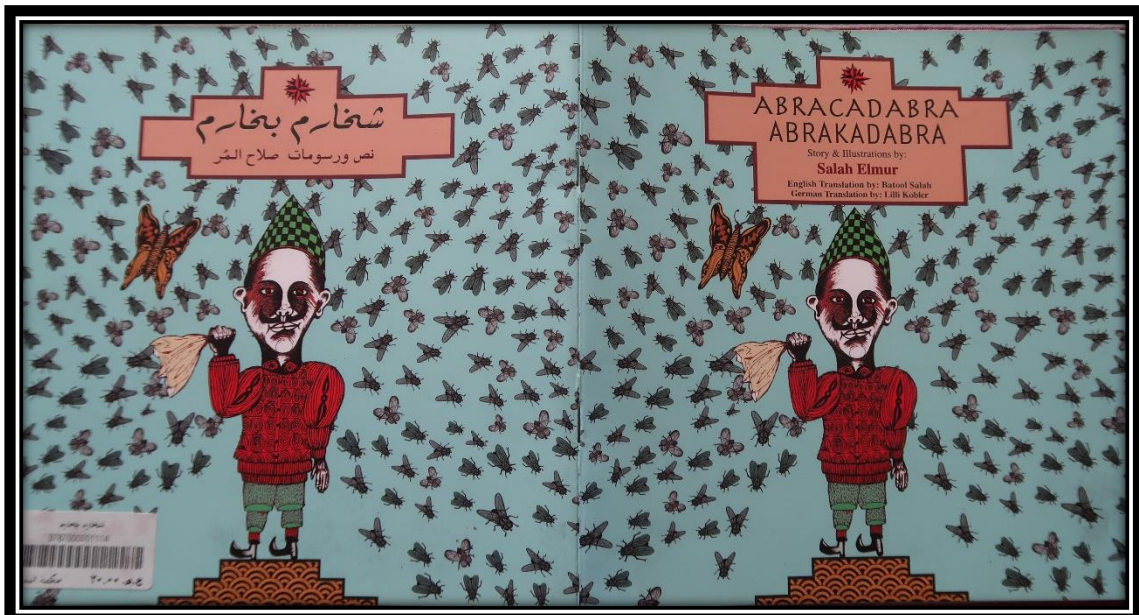
During the readings Susanne shared a bilingual English/Farsi book called *The Wibbley Wobbly Tooth* by David Mills and Julia Crouth. Susanne (an Arabic speaker) and the reader (a Farsi speaker) started reading from right to left, assuming that the directionality of the Farsi would lead the story rather than the English. They were halfway in before they realised the story was not quite working out. This raised some questions about which language was being privileged and why.

Mediators should be aware of the directionality and be prepared to look for dual language texts that offer alternatives directions in terms of reading the texts.

This photograph shows *Ali and the Camel* by Fay Gabriel and Lynn Jones which was published to be read from right to left.



The photograph shows a trilingual book called *Abacadabra* by Salah Elmur that can be read in either direction.



Note: This activity was developed by Nicola Daly, Dorea Kleker and Kathy Short with input from Julie McAdam. It comes out of a project funded by the Center of Educational Resources in Culture, Language and Literacy at the University of Arizona. During this project, Nicola was a Fulbright New Zealand Scholar hosted by the University of Arizona.