

50 Strategies

for Teaching English Language Learners

Adrienne Herrell
Michael Jordan



sixth edition

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SIXTH EDITION

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Cover Design: Pearson CSC, Jerilyn Bockorick
Cover Art: ©FatCamera/Getty
Full Service Vendor: Pearson CSC
Full-Service Project Management: Pearson CSC, Gowri Duraiswamy
Editorial Project Manager: Pearson CSC, Martin 'Tinah' Aurea
Printer/Binder: LSC Communications, Inc
Cover Printer: Phoenix Color Corporation
Text Font: PalatinolTPro-Roman

Chapter opening photos (left to right): © Petro Feketa/Fotolia; © Monkey Business/Fotolia; © Rob/Fotolia; © Monkey Business/Fotolia.

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Herrell, Adrienne L., author. | Jordan, Michael, 1944- author.
Title: 50 strategies for teaching English language learners / Adrienne L. Herrell, Michael Jordan.
Other titles: Fifty strategies for teaching English language learners
Description: Sixth edition. | Hoboken : Pearson, [2018] | Includes bibliographical references.
Identifiers: LCCN 2018041648 | ISBN 9780134986616 | ISBN 013498661X
Subjects: LCSH: English language—Study and teaching—Foreign speakers.
Classification: LCC PE1128.A2 H467 2018 | DDC 428.2/4071—dc23 LC record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018041648>

To Susan McCloskey for her years of dedicated teaching of English learners and
for all the things we have learned by observing in her classroom.

AH & MJ

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Preface

New to This Edition

This sixth edition of *50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners* presents a major focus in identifying and teaching students at their language development level. With adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), educators across the United States are reflecting on exemplary practices and research in strategies for supporting intellectual and educational growth in students of all ages. Common Core does, however, present additional challenges for students who are in the process of acquiring English. In this edition, you will notice the following:

- **A new chapter** is included that addresses the choice and use of technology strategies based on the needs of your students.
- **Additional adaptation charts** have been provided for matching the teaching strategies to the language levels of your students
- **Additional teacher self-evaluation rubrics** are included throughout this new edition to support teachers in ensuring that they are fully implementing exemplary strategies. These rubrics also provide ideas for improving teacher implementations.

Acknowledgments

We are extremely appreciative of the professors who took the time to review the fourth edition and give us suggestions for improving the fifth edition. This is a time-consuming task, but improving educational strategies is obviously a priority to these professors: Daniel Gilhooly, University of Central Missouri; Tom Salsbury, Washington State University; Lena Shaqareq, University of North Florida; and Ana Torres, Texas Tech University.

An Introduction to the Strategies

The 50 strategies included in this edition have been sequenced to represent their importance and complexity of implementation. The first 15 strategies are presented to support some very basic requirements in any classroom that contains English language learners (ELLs) or limited English experience students (LEEs). Limited English experience students are those whose first language is English but who have limited vocabularies and experiences engaging in social or academic English. In today's busy society the students we teach sometimes have not had the experiences or verbal interaction opportunities they might have had in times past (Trelease, 2013).

It is crucial that classrooms provide multiple opportunities for students to practice verbal interaction in both social and academic English (Goldenberg, 2008). It is also important for teachers to establish an accepting and supportive classroom environment. The strategies included in this edition provide multiple ways to accomplish these goals on a daily basis.

The cultures that students bring to the classroom have an effect on their learning as well. Some cultures stress sharing, and students find it difficult not to share answers, even in a testing situation. They don't necessarily think of sharing as "cheating." They just have been deeply acculturated to share everything. Some other cultural considerations are explored in the video links, which address additional areas that teachers must consider in order to teach the whole child.

A teacher's job in a culturally rich society presents many challenges. We offer the strategies in this edition to support teachers in providing an environment and learning community in which they and their students will thrive. All of the strategies have been field-tested in classrooms in several states and have received powerful feedback:

"These strategies WORK with both our ELLs and our English-only students."—Susan McCloskey, Fresno Unified School District

"Many of my English-only students have very limited vocabularies and all the students have greatly benefited from the strategies in this book."—Jennifer Bateman, Dahlonega, Georgia

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Theoretical Overview

In this section of *50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*, you are introduced to the **basic theory, principles, and assessment strategies** underlying the effective teaching of students who are in the process of acquiring English as a second language.

This section provides the research and **exemplary practices** on which the 50 teaching strategies are built. It is vital that teachers make good choices in their everyday **interactions** with students, particularly students for whom English is not their first language. To make good choices in the way they plan instruction, interact verbally, correct mistakes, and assess English language learners, teachers must understand how language is acquired.

Educators are encountering a growing number of **English language learners (ELLs)** in their classrooms. They have become the fastest growing segment of the population in public schools today, with more than 9 percent of students in schools in the United States attending public schools coming from a home where a language other than English is spoken as their first language. This is a growth of 32% compared to numbers a decade ago, while overall student enrollment only gained 4.9% (United States Department of Education, 2017). To add to the challenge, accountability requirements of the **No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)**, **Race to the Top (RTT)**, and the **Common Core State Standards (CCSS)** include English learners in the legal requirements for assessment. Their scores are often required to be factored into the determination of whether a school is making **adequate yearly progress (AYP)**. All of these elements add to the critical need for teachers to find effective strategies for teaching all learners. To learn more about each of these federal initiatives, you might want to explore the following websites:

NCLB—en.wikipedia.org/wiki/No_Child_Left_Behind_Act

RTT—en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Race_to_the_Top

CCSS—en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Core_State_Standards_Initiative

This sixth edition of *50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners* incorporates and blends both the Common Core and the National Standards for Teaching English Language Learners published by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). While the Common Core focuses on a nationally consistent “shared set of standards” for English and language arts and mathematics, it initially made limited provisions for supporting academic language acquisition while simultaneously learning academic content. TESOL standards provide teachers with clear guidelines in supporting ELLs as they become more proficient in speaking, writing, and comprehending social and academic English. “TESOL’s *PREK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)*, 2006) provide a resource to blend both the CCSS and the individual state standards so

that ELLs are prepared to meet the goals of college and career readiness” (TESOL, 2013). This ongoing quest for ways to build and maintain proficient bilingual students in schools can only be achieved with teachers who understand the value of good teaching. These are teachers who can teach the language of the content, differentiate instruction, and scaffold learning to produce academically successful students who stay in school and are given every opportunity to participate fully and equitably.

Theoretical Overview

The research in language acquisition has been rich and productive during the past 25 years. Working together, linguists and educators have discovered effective ways to support students in their acquisition of new languages and content knowledge (Crawford & Krashen, 2007). It is vital that classroom teachers understand the implications of language acquisition research so they can provide the scaffolding and verbal interactions necessary for their students to be successful in the classroom.

Language Acquisition Theory and the Classroom Teacher

For classroom teachers to make good decisions about instructional practices for English language learners, they must understand how students acquire English and how this acquisition differs from the way foreign languages have traditionally been taught in the United States (Collier, 1995). Many teachers have experienced classes in Spanish, French, or other languages in which they have practiced repetitive drills and translated long passages using English–French (or Spanish) dictionaries. While these approaches have been used to study languages for many years in the United States, it should be noted that linguists such as Jim Cummins and Stephen Krashen have been researching and offering new approaches to language acquisition.

Seminal research in language acquisition was conducted in the 1980s and has been built upon continuously since that time. In his 1982 study of language acquisition, Krashen makes a distinction between language acquisition and language learning that is vital to the support of students’ gradual acquisition of fluency in a new language. He states that **language acquisition** is a natural thing. Young children acquire their home language easily without formal teaching. However, teachers must also keep in mind other factors such as gender, ethnicity, and the learner’s immigrant or “non-native” status, and how these affect language learning (Canagarajah, 2006). Language acquisition is gradual, based on receiving and understanding messages, building a listening (receptive) vocabulary, and slowly attempting verbal production of the language in a highly supportive, nonstressful setting. It is exactly these same conditions that foster the acquisition of a second language. The teacher is responsible for providing the understandable language—**comprehensible input**—along with whatever supports are necessary for the students to internalize the messages. To explore the importance of comprehensible input and the role the teacher plays in making language understandable, view this video and think about ways you, as a teacher, can provide instruction that is comprehensible. Ask yourself:

- How is planning important in providing comprehensible input?
- What habits do teachers need to develop in order to be more understandable?

Using approaches and materials that add context to the language—props, gestures, pictures—contributes to the child’s language acquisition and eventually to the production of the new language. Recent trends in language acquisition support in the classroom rely heavily on

- using assessment of the learner’s needs,
- present level of functioning, and
- individual motivation to acquire the target language in structuring the teaching methods to be employed (Canagarajah, 2006).

Krashen and Terrell (1983), even in their earliest research, stressed the need for English language learners to be allowed to move into verbal production of the new language at a comfortable rate. Students must hear and understand messages in the target language and build a listening vocabulary before being expected to produce spoken language. This does not mean that the English language learners should be uninvolved in classroom activities but that the activities should be structured so that they can participate at a comfortable level. Questions asked of them should be answerable at first with gestures, nods, or other physical responses. This language acquisition stage is called the silent or **preproduction period**, and it is a vital start to language acquisition. The subsequent stages and implications for teaching and learning are explained in Chapter 15, *Leveled Questions*. For a description of the language development stages, see Figure TO.1.

It is important to recognize that levels of language proficiency are dynamic; that is, they change as students grow and learn. TESOL has adopted a slightly different description of the levels of language proficiency that accounts for the changes that take place as students make progress in acquiring English proficiency and emphasizes the ongoing changes that take place. TESOL’s descriptors are organized into five levels: starting, emerging, developing, expanding, and bridging. Figure TO.2 shows the levels and their characteristics.

Researchers around the world have explored approaches to teaching language. German researcher Leo van Lier insists that the most important aspect of effective teaching is understanding the learner. He ascribes to Vygotsky’s theory (1962) that teaching and assessing in the child’s **zone of proximal development (ZPD)** is vital, as is the role of verbal interaction. The “AAA curriculum” (van Lier, 1996) is based on three foundational principles: awareness, autonomy, and authenticity. In the area of awareness, van Lier sees focusing attention and the role of perception as vital for teachers and learners. Both students and teachers must (1) know what they are doing and why, (2) be consciously engaged, and (3) reflect on the learning process. Autonomy involves **self-regulation, motivation, and deep processing**, all of which include taking responsibility, being accountable, and having free choice in learning activities. Van Lier believes that all these

FIGURE TO.1 Stages of Language Development

<p>Preproduction (also known as the silent period) Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicates with gestures, actions, and formulaic speech • Often still in silent period • Is building receptive vocabulary <p>Early Production Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can say, “I don’t understand.” • Can label and categorize information <p>Speech Emergence Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses language purposefully • Can produce complete sentence <p>Intermediate Fluency Characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can produce connected narrative • Can use reading and writing within the context of a lesson • Can write answers to higher-level questions • Can resolve conflicts verbally
--

FIGURE TO.2 Performance Definitions of the Five Levels of English Language Proficiency

English language learners can understand and use . . .

Level 1 Starting	Level 2 Emerging	Level 3 Developing	Level 4 Expanding	Level 5 Bridging
. . . language to communicate with others around basic concrete needs.	. . . language to draw on simple and routine experiences to communicate with others.	. . . language to communicate with others on familiar matters regularly encountered.	. . . language in both concrete and abstract situations and apply language to new experiences.	. . . a wide range of longer oral and written texts and recognize implicit meaning.
. . . high-frequency words and memorized chunks of language.	. . . high-frequency and some general academic vocabulary and expressions.	. . . general and some specialized academic vocabulary and expressions.	. . . specialized and some technical academic vocabulary and expressions.	. . . technical academic vocabulary and expressions.
. . . words, phrases, or chunks of language.	. . . phrases or short sentences in oral or written communication.	. . . expanded sentences in oral or written communication.	. . . a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in oral and written communication.	. . . a variety of sentence lengths of varying linguistic complexity in extended oral or written discourse.
. . . pictorial, graphic, or nonverbal representation of language.	. . . oral or written language, making errors that may impede the communication.	. . . oral or written language, making errors that may impede the communication, but retain much of its meaning.	. . . oral or written language, making minimal errors that do not impede the overall meaning of the communication.	. . . oral or written language approaching comparability to that of English-proficient peers.

Source: From PreK–12 English Language Proficiency Standards, 2006, TESOL. Copyright 2006 by the Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages. Used with permission.

principles apply to both learners and teachers, and he encourages teachers to provide opportunities for autonomy for the students as teachers make curriculum choices that address the needs of individuals. This is in direct opposition to packaged curricula that require all students to move through the activities in the same manner and pace.

The third principle of van Lier's approach is authenticity. He defines **authenticity** as teaching and learning language as it is used in life, being relevant, and basing all learning activities on true communication. All the aspects of authenticity involve a commitment to learning, integrity, and respect on the part of both learner and teacher. Hart and Risley (2003) concur with van Lier. They found that a child's experience with language mattered more than **socioeconomic status**, race, or anything else they measured.

The role of practice in language learning is addressed by van Lier in his principles. He identifies two aspects of practice that must be considered: focus and control. Although he agrees that learning a language requires lessons that focus on various aspects of the language, he believes that activities such as guided dialogues, role takings, and simulations are not so narrowly focused. They require language learners to problem-solve and choose their own words instead of simply parroting standard responses.

A summary of van Lier's thoughts on language activities and specifically language practice includes the following five points:

1. Quality of exposure and interactions is more important than quantity. Thoughtfully designed activities that engage students and encourage authentic language participation are more valuable than numerous, repetitive parroting exercises.
2. The quality of the interaction is determined by a student's access. The comprehensibility of the activity, the context in which it takes place, the student's familiarity with the topic and the others engaged, and the student's self-confidence are all factors that make an activity work to advance language understanding.
3. Students must be receptive to participation in activities. In order for this to take place, students must feel that they can be successful and will receive support if needed.
4. In order for the language activities to become a part of a student's language **repertoire**, the student must process the material both cognitively and socially.
5. In order for new learning to be remembered and accessible, various forms of practice, including rehearsal, may be necessary (van Lier, 1996).

The principles noted by van Lier have an important impact on the types of activities we plan for our language learners. Keep in mind his emphasis on considering students' interests, personalities, and motivation; actively engaging students; and assuring students that they will be supported as they participate.

The role of the classroom environment in supporting children's language acquisition cannot be ignored. Meaningful exposure to language is not enough. Students need many opportunities for language interaction. Swain and Lapkin (1997) propose that a classroom where children work together to solve problems and produce projects supports their language development in several ways. It gives them authentic reasons to communicate and support in refining their language production. It also helps students understand that their verbal communication is not always understood by others. This realization helps to move children from **receptive, semantic processing** (listening to understand) to **expressive, syntactic processing** (formation of words and sentences to communicate). If children are simply left to listen and observe without the opportunity or necessity to communicate they remain in the **preproductive stage** for an extended period of time. The structure of **communicative classroom activities**, those that necessitate communication and verbal interaction, prevents this from happening. As far back as 1991, a shift in classroom structures for English learners was under way (Brown, 1991). The shift includes a number of areas as illustrated by the following:

We are moving from:

A focus on product
Teacher-controlled classrooms
Preplanned, rigid curricula
Measuring only performance
Praising correct answers

and shifting to:

a focus on process
student-involved classrooms
flexible, open-ended curricula
gauging competence and potential
building on approximations

Source: Adapted from Brown (1991).

The values underlying these shifts are clear. "Teaching practices that are **process-oriented, autonomous, and experiential** are considered empowering. The shift from the previous product-oriented and teacher-fronted **pedagogies** certainly reduced passivity of students and encouraged greater involvement" (Canagarajah, 2006; Zhang, Munawar, Nui, Anderson, 2016).

In addition to the shift in teaching focus in the 1990s, the focus of the Common Core standards added another challenge to teachers and students alike. Teachers implementing Common Core are expected to raise **student interactions** to include requiring that students explain the processes they use to obtain answers in mathematics as well as strategies they use in solving problems or reading for understanding. This change in requirements provides an additional challenge to both teachers

and ELLs. Standards provide a tool for identifying the language as well as the content that ELLs are expected to achieve. **English Language Proficiency Standards (ELPS)** act as a starting point for identifying the language that ELLs must develop to access and negotiate **content** successfully. They provide the bridge to the **content-area standards** expected of all students (Fenner & Segota, 2012).

Current Research Related to Teaching Reading to English Language Learners

It is widely recognized that limited language proficiency hampers reading development in English (August & Shanahan, 2006). Reading proficiency is central to student learning in all content areas and, because of this, has generated a large number of research studies in recent years (Brown, 2007). In 2012, the Educational Testing Service published an extensive review of literature concerned with teaching reading to English language learners (Turkan, Bicknell, & Croft, 2012). This report identifies successful strategies for teachers who want to become effective teachers of English language learners and groups the approaches into three areas of importance for ELLs:

1. Teachers should recognize that literacy skills in the ELLs' native languages might influence their processing of linguistic information in English.
2. Teachers should facilitate active learning of academic vocabulary and the linking of new vocabulary to everyday experiences.
3. Teachers should be able to guide ELLs with metacognitive reading strategies that help them monitor and repair comprehension problems.

Literacy Skills in the First Language

Although it is widely recognized that students who already know how to read in their first language have an advantage in learning to read English, there are some ways that reading knowledge in one language may interfere with comprehension in English, or any second language. Several studies found that phonological awareness in Spanish supported the growth of phonological awareness in English (Leafstedt, Richards, & Gerber, 2004; Lindsey, Manis, & Bailey, 2003). There has been some attention to the possible interference caused by false cognates in English. Cognates are words in English that sound similar to Spanish words. False cognates are words that are similar in spelling in both languages but have different meanings in English (Durgunoglu, 2002). This becomes problematic when teachers have limited or no knowledge of the students' first languages. There are resources available to teachers, however. In *Learner English*, Swan and Smith (2001) examine the types of interference students of various languages encounter when they are in the process of acquiring English. By identifying the differences between various languages and English, the book helps teachers pinpoint difficulties in reading, writing, and speaking that may be due to the interference of rules and formats from a student's first language (see Chapter 24, Cognate Strategies). There are also lists of cognates and false cognates available online that provide teachers with knowledge of when to draw on students' cognate knowledge and when to warn them of false cognates. Several good lists of cognates and non-cognates are available online.

Vocabulary Instruction

Calderon (2007) highlighted the importance of teachers understanding the levels of lexical challenge presented by different English words. Based on the work of Beck, McKeown, and Kucan (2002), Calderon suggests that teachers distinguish words as belonging to one of three tiers:

Tier one words are common, everyday words in English that are probably understood in the students' first language. These words can often be taught by providing a visual or referring to a word in the students' first language.

Tier two words are more academic words that are used across disciplines. Many of these words are prepositions and conjunctions that are used across all content areas, for example: *so, at, into, within, by, if, and then*. Understanding the relationship implied by

these words supports the students' comprehension of academic language. Without this understanding, comprehension of tier three vocabulary becomes more challenging.

Tier three words are infrequently used words that may be content-specific. These words often have cognate words in the students' first language.

Townsend and Collins (2009) drew on the findings of an intervention study to suggest that teachers provide multiple exposures to target words in multiple texts so students have many opportunities to use words in meaningful contexts (see Chapter 7, Collecting and Processing Words and Chapter 6, Vocabulary Role-Play).

Calderon (2007) and Herrera, Perez, and Escamilla (2010) suggest several additional instructional approaches. Teachers should:

- preteach vocabulary including contextualization to support the text to be read;
- differentiate their vocabulary instruction based on students' language development level;
- choose words from the correct tier to enable students to comprehend;
- use graphic organizers to support vocabulary understanding (see Chapter 30, Graphic Organizers);
- make vocabulary collections (see Chapter 7, Collecting and Processing Words);
- incorporate oral activities to give students practice in using the new vocabulary (see Chapter 19, Verb Action); and
- provide multiple opportunities to use the new vocabulary in several contexts during the school day.

Several researchers have focused on the importance of contextualizing vocabulary. McIntyre, Kyle, and Chen (2008) found that the connections made between new vocabulary and students' past experiences are vital in supporting the students' retention and use of the vocabulary, both orally and in writing. The research done by McIntyre et al. (2008) and Marzano and Pickering (2006) also found that repeated practice with new vocabulary serves a vital role in the retention and use of words. Other recommendations include:

- using Total Physical Response with beginning-level ELLs (see Chapter 2, Total Physical Response), and
- acting out word meanings (see Chapter 6, Vocabulary Role-Play) .

Rieg and Parquette (2009) present the idea that ELLs' comprehension of vocabulary and text is enhanced through music, drama, and reader's theater activities (see Chapter 12, Repeated Readings). Porter (2009) suggests several strategies:

- using adapted texts or abridged versions of texts;
- reading summaries of text before reading the actual text; and
- using visual aids such as maps of character relationships, student-produced storyboards, and student illustrations depicting characters or scenes in the text.

Zhang et al (2016) present an approach to conducting discussion groups focused on interactions among students after reading a common text. The teacher's questioning provided support for both students' involvement in the group and their deeper understanding of the text.

Focusing on text "structure" is identified by Dreher and Grey (2010) as a vital part of supporting ELLs in comprehending text. Very often ELLs are not familiar with sentence structures such as *compare* and *contrast*. Providing direct instruction in comprehending sentence structure as well as specific vocabulary connected with varying sentence structure supports both vocabulary and comprehension development. Terms such as *unlike*, *similar to*, *compared to*, and *resembles* require identification, definition, and practice in use. Combining reading and writing instruction by discussing, identifying, and then writing sentence structures like compare-and-contrast statements supports student understanding and presents an opportunity to assess student achievement in an authentic way.

Several researchers (Cummins, 2003; Shanahan & Beck, 2006) have noted that teachers should emphasize vocabulary but also emphasize comprehension. Research supports the use of a reading instruction approach that balances an emphasis on word recognition with the teaching of high-level reading strategies. This is also emphasized in the Common Core, where much attention is

paid to high-level comprehension skills such as recognizing motivation in characters and the way in which word choice changes the nuances of meaning. These types of reading strategies require that students use self-monitoring or metacognition skills.

Improving Metacognition Skills

Herrera et al. (2010), p. 142) define metacognition skills as the “ability to think about [one’s] own thinking.” Proficient readers are able to monitor their own understanding of text, identify problems when they are not comprehending, and find resources to build their understanding (e.g., bilingual dictionaries, reading strategies, and asking clarifying questions). Other exemplary practices for ELLs identified in the research include:

- teaching students to verbalize their thought processes while reading (Herrera et al., 2010; Vacca & Vacca, 2008);
- teaching students to use think-aloud strategies combined with (1) making predictions, (2) developing images from the text as its being read, (3) linking to information to past knowledge or experience, and (4) demonstrating strategies they employ to explain how they got their information (Vacca & Vacca, 2008);
- providing explicit instruction in strategies such as questioning, making inferences, monitoring, summarizing, visualizing, and identifying main ideas (Mokhtari & Sheorey, 2002; Taboada, 2010); and
- explicitly modeling strategies and ensuring that students have repeated **guided practice** in using them.

Supporting English Language Learners in Constructing Meaning

Making meaning is defined by Ajayi (2008) as “a process by which learners gain critical consciousness of the interpretation of events in their lives in relation to the world around them” (p. 211). This concept stresses that meaning is created by individual learners, and that they construct meaning after reading a story or watching a video while being influenced by their own social, cultural, and historical experiences.

The role of the teacher is important in supporting students in building on their background knowledge and cultural experiences (Herrera et al., 2010). Successful strategies found for facilitating students’ abilities to integrate past knowledge and experience with understanding of texts being read include:

- using literature logs to encourage students to think about the meanings of words, ideas, and themes in text (see Chapter 7, Collecting and Processing Words);
- promoting students’ extended verbal and written interactions by *working the text*—reading it, rereading it, discussing it, and writing about it (see Chapter 11, Close Reading);
- using literature circles to support students’ in making text-to-self, text-to-text, and text-to-world connections (Farris et al., 2007); and
- using multiple modalities to communicate meaning by providing pictures, songs, textbooks, narratives, spoken and written words, gestures, films, or videos that support understanding (Ajayi, 2008; see Chapter 4, Visual Scaffolding).

Many researchers (Krashen, 1982; Krashen & Terrell, 1983; McLaughlin, 1990) have studied the role of emotions in the acquisition of language. Krashen calls the effect of emotions on learning the **affective filter**. When a learner is placed in a stressful situation in which language production or performance is demanded, the student’s ability to learn or produce spoken language may be impaired. This underscores the responsibility of the teachers to provide a supportive classroom environment in which students can participate at a comfortable level without having to worry about being embarrassed or placed in a situation where they will be made to feel incompetent. Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis stresses that for a student to learn effectively, the student’s motivation and self-esteem must be supported while anxiety is diminished. This provides an opportunity for the English language learner to take in information, process vocabulary, and eventually produce language because stress levels are lowered and the affective filter is not interfering with thinking and learning.

Motivation and Competition as they relate to English Language Learners

Motivation is generally recognized as a key factor in language learning. In first language learning, the basic need to communicate wants and desires is highly motivational. Ushioda (2013) asserts that motivation is a key factor in second language learning, as well. Because of this factor, teachers must recognize that their ability to motivate is extremely important to their teaching effectiveness. A major factor in students' development of autonomy is the teacher's ability to support them in acquiring techniques that support their learning success through individual effort and the use of strategies and self-regulation methods (Kormos & Csizer, 2013).

Competition is a motivational approach used in many classrooms. Its success has been shown to be dependent upon students' confidence and perception of themselves as learners.

Two types of competition are typically used in the classroom: self and social. In self-competition, students try to achieve personal bests by improving their performance and tracking their progress. The teacher helps by setting up a record-keeping system and consistently celebrating student achievements. Self-competition is seen as a more positive approach with English Language Learners until their abilities to communicate in English become more closely aligned to their peers (Zhi-Hong, 2014).

An alternate approach used by some teachers allows the use of both systems at the same time. The idea is to have some students track their own personal achievements while others compete and compare with one another. For example, if teams are doing math problems on the board, self-competitors do the same problems at their seats and keep track of their own successes. That way everyone gets the practice, some individual and some social. This allows students who are motivated by team competition the enjoyment of "comparing" while others can choose to compete solely with themselves. Self-competitors should be encouraged to keep track of their growth in a small notebook in much the same way that athletes keep track of their "personal bests".

Language Demands on the Student

Jim Cummins's research (2000) contributes to the understanding of language acquisition and effective classroom practice in several ways. First, Cummins differentiates between social language, called **basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS)**, and **academic language**, called **cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP)**. Though students may acquire BICS and be able to communicate in English while on the playground or when asking and answering simple questions, this is not the same thing as having the level of language proficiency necessary to benefit fully from academic English instruction without additional support. As you watch this video in which Dr. Cummins explains his theories, think about the following questions:

- What indicators of a student's acquisition of BICS would a teacher be able to observe?
- How would indicators of CALP differ from those of BICS?

Cummins's theory of the differences between social and academic language has been criticized, especially by proponents of the whole language approach. Although Cummins responds to these criticisms in his book *Language, Power, and Pedagogy* (2000), he still maintains that, although social and academic language are not mutually exclusive, differences between the two are real. He also maintains that instruction in academic language does not have to be reduced to "drill and kill." One of the criticisms of his theory is based on the definition of academic language as "decontextualized." One of the important approaches to teaching academics to English learners is the use of **visuals**, manipulatives, and **multiple examples** to provide **context** and promote understanding. Cummins also emphasizes the power of academic language in promoting success for English learners, both in school and in life (Cummins, 2000).

Cummins helps us understand what must be added to instruction to make it comprehensible to students. He identifies two **dimensions of language**: its **cognitive demand** and its **context embeddedness**. Using a **quadrant matrix**, Cummins (1996) demonstrates how the addition of context supports students' understanding of all verbal communication and is vital with more