Teachers and English Language Learners Swimming Together in the Mainstream

Introduction

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Over the past ten years, the number of English language learners[1] (ELLs) in the nation's pre-K-12 schools has increased by 95%. The latest statistics show that there are currently 4.7 million students who are in the process of learning English as a second language as well as academic content (NCELA, 2004). ELLs spend only a small part of their school day in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. The remainder of their school day is spent with mainstream teachers[2] in grade-level classrooms where ELLs receive their math, social studies, science, and other content instruction—all of which is usually conducted in English. Despite this ongoing change in the student population, most mainstream teachers have had little or no preparation through their teacher education or inservice programs for working with ELLs. Only 12.5% of teachers report having received eight or more hours of training for teaching ELLs (Gruber, Wiley, Broughman, Strizek, & Burian-Fitzgerald, 2002). Many teachers are concerned about ELLs' ability to participate in grade-level istruction in English, fearing that they will sink under a burden of incomprehensible sounds and ideas. Teachers are urgently asking how they can best help prepare ELLs to achieve academically, linguistically, and socially.

This issue of *Thresholds in Education* is dedicated to answering those questions by providing inservice and preservice teachers and teacher educators with practical information grounded in a solid research foundation of how to teach this culturally and linguistically diverse population of students. Teachers may find ideas to help them and their students swim through the mainstream classroom while learning and growing

> *There are currently 4.7 million students who are in the process of learning English as a second language.*

and gaining confidence in their abilities. Experts in the education of English language learners have contributed articles on modifying content instruction, developing language and literacy, assessing ELLs, welcoming students new to English with opportunities for literacy activities, engaging high school students in classroom discussions, and collaborating between mainstream and ESL teachers.

Lorrie Verplaetse, Naomi Migliacci, Kathleen Doyle, and Carola Osses offer their recommendations for sheltered instruction for ELLs. Based on their experience with professional development for teachers, they provide examples of effective techniques that teachers can use to make course material comprehensible to all their students and that engages ELLs in interaction and learning in the classroom. The title of their article, *Mainstream Teachers + Sheltered Instruction = Engaged English Learners*, sets the stage for the wealth of practical information to follow.

In *Instructional Anchors for English Language Learners: Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared*, Kathleen Mohr offers practical classroom strategies that she has tested in her role as teacher, researcher, and teacher educator. Her "flotation devices" can help guide students in their language and literacy development.

Mayra Carrillo-Daniel tackles the tough issue of assessment of students still in the process of developing their English in *Equity in the Assessment of English Language Learners: Providing Options for Success*. She alerts us to the pitfalls of testing without considering the language factor and suggests different ways to effectively assess students' content knowledge.

Chris Liska Carger shares her concerns about the

education of Latino children in *Those Spanish Kids Just Won't Talk: Teaching Latino Students in Mainstream Classrooms.* She offers advice on ways to welcome students and engage them in meaningful literacy activities.

Relating to classroom discussions, Yu Ren Dong uses actual classroom dialogue to point out the difficulties that ELLs can face when attempting to learn from and participate in classroom activities in mainstream secondary classrooms. In *Promoting ELL Students' Participation in Mainstream Subject Matter Class Discussions,* she provides examples of effective and ineffective classroom discussions and guidance on how teachers can adjust their instructional techniques to provide opportunities for full participation by ELLs.

In the final article, I provide practical advice on how mainstream and ESL teachers can collaborate to promote the academic success of their ELLs. In *They're Our Kids: Mainstream and ESL Teachers Working Together for Success of English Language Learners,* I offer specific suggestions on how mainstream teachers can analyze lessons and provide ESL teachers with the information needed to prepare students for success in mainstream classrooms.

The authors of these useful and insightful articles hope that teachers will not only implement these teaching practices into their classrooms but also will discuss them in faculty lounges. Sharing this informa tion with other teachers, administrators, and staff allows everyone to participate in providing an equitable education of the highest quality for English language learners.

Endnotes

1   I use "English language learners" (ELLs) instead of "limited English proficient" (LEP) to refer to students who are in the process of learning English as a second language to focus on the development of these students' language and academic abilities rather than assuming they are limited in their abilities.

2   I use "mainstream teacher" to refer to teachers whose primary population of students are native English speakers and who teach their subjects in the English language.

References

Gruber, K. J., Wiley, S. D., Broughman, S. P., Strizek, G. A., & Burian-Fitzgerald, M. (2002). *Schools and staffing survey, 1999-2000: Overview of the data for public, private, public charter, and Bureau of Indian Affairs elementary and secondary schools.* Retrieved on June 22, 2003, from http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2002/21002313.pdf.

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (NCELA). (2004). *The growing numbers of limited English proficient students, 1991/92-2001/02.* Retrieved July 6, 2004 from http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/states/stateposter.pdf.

Professional Organizations And Conferences
For All Teachers Of English Language Learners

National Association for Bilingual Education (NABE)
www.nabe.org

The National Association for Bilingual Education is the only professional organization at the national level devoted to representing both English language learners and bilingual education professionals. Their annual conference is dedicated to exploring topics of interest to teachers, administrators, and parents of English language learners, including second language acquisition, bilingual education, assessment and accountability, teacher training, and special education, and grassroots activism.

Illinois Association for Multilingual Multicultural Education (IAMME)
www.iamme.org

IAMME (an affiliate of NABE) is a professional organization that promotes high quality educational policies and practices for linguistically and culturally diverse students including English language learners.

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
www.tesol.org

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL), is a global education association with approximately 13,000 members in over 120 countries. Its mission is to ensure excellence in English language teaching to speakers of other languages.

Illinois TESOL and Bilingual Education Association (ITBE)
www.itbe.org

Illinois TESOL•BE (an affiliate of TESOL) is a non-profit professional organization of individuals involved in professional development, legislation, government issues, and special interest groups for the teaching of English to speakers of other languages and bilingual education. Illinois TESOL•BE's purpose is to further the development of pedagogically sound, socially responsible teaching and administrative practices. Check their website for their annual conference announcement.

Illinois Resource Center
www.thecenterweb.org

The Illinois Resource Center (IRC) provides assistance to teachers and administrators serving linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Mainstream Teachers + Sheltered Instruction = Engaged English Language Learners

Lorrie Stoops Verplaetse
Naomi Migliacci
Kathleen Doyle
Carola Osses
Southern Connecticut State University

Just as we have become familiar with the old African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," today's educators are realizing that it takes an entire school system to educate a child and to include the linguistic minority child—the English language learner (ELL). In the past 30 years, most educators believed that the best way to educate ELLs was to send them to the ESL teacher or bilingual education teacher until their English was strong enough to mainstream them: Then they could be treated as other students.

Numbers Tell it All

But the numbers tell us a different story. What has been done in the past may not be the best solution as we look toward the future. A quick look at the numbers tells us . . .

- U.S. public schools fail to graduate approximately 33% of all Hispanic students (Garcia, 1994).
- U.S. public schools fail to graduate 66% of all immigrant students. (Garcia, 1994). This is the largest failure rate of all minority groups.
- By the year 2030, it is conservatively estimated that 40% of all public school children will be ELLs (Thomas & Collier, 2002).
- While ELLs gain oral proficiency in conversational English in 1 to 2 years, it takes anywhere from 5 to 9 years to develop the academic language proficiency necessary to function successfully in an academic or professional business setting (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000).

These numbers tell us that public schools have not yet succeeded in finding the appropriate way to successfully educate ELLs and that the need to educate ELLs is a growing challenge. The numbers also tell us that, given the length of time it takes to develop academic language proficiency, we cannot possibly relegate that responsibility to only the ESL teachers and bilingual educators: The responsibility of educating ELLs must be shared by the language specialists and the mainstream educators of the school system.

Professional Development in Sheltered Instruction

As teachers, administrators, and school services personnel realize their responsibility in educating ELLs, they are eagerly looking for answers on how to best work with them. For the past four years, 321 educators have come to Southern Connecticut State University's "Training for All Teachers Program," a grant-sponsored, five-year professional development program funded by the U. S. Department of Education, for seeking answers to this very question. Some educators have taken a 10-hour training program; others have taken a 3-hour credit course. In both cases, teachers were required to follow up with   on-the-job application with the support of a program mentor who kept a log of the teacher modifications and comments on their effectiveness for ELLs. Following are some of the answers that teachers have found, their comments and illustrations of instructional strategies that work for ELLs.

During the training sessions, teachers learn about "sheltered instruction," a term that describes a way of teaching course content and simultaneously developing language skills for language minority students who are still learning the language used in the course instruction. Sheltered instruction is not another new method that must be "added on" to a never ending list of techniques that a teacher must put into her bag of tricks. The most common responses received from training participants are, "This is nothing new: It's just excellent teaching" and "I think *all* our students could

from this kind of instruction, not just ELLs." And our response is, "Yes, that's true. But while this kind of instruction may be beneficial for all students, it is *absolutely necessary* for most ELLs, or they cannot succeed."

While we know that teachers do their best, they often don't know what to do for this population. One teacher commented, "I thought I was teaching through content, but I was really teaching a topic-based series of vocabulary lessons. I did not know how to make content cognitively challenging but linguistically within reach for second language learners . . . I have completely changed as a teacher." One of the goals of the training is to provide teachers with sheltered instruction strategies that work for ELLs.

Sheltered instruction can be divided into two simple categories: (1) How do we make the course material comprehensible to the ELL? and (2) How do we engage the ELL with the course content, with the teacher, and with other students? These two categories correspond to the two main ingredients required for second language acquisition: (1) comprehensible input, and (2) opportunities for interaction and extended output.

In this article, we will identify various techniques that make course material comprehensible or that increase opportunities for interaction. And we will offer examples of sheltered strategies developed by educators who have taken our professional development training. Finally, we will share insights from our participants which shed light on adopting a sheltered instruction approach to teaching.

Making the Course Content Comprehensible

The way to make course content comprehensible is to first distill the content down to its most essential gist and then find ways to convey that gist visually and/or with simple language. We maintain that *any* information, no matter how complicated, can be reduced to an essential gist which can be conveyed in simple language with the help of visual aids.

Graphic Organizers

When used as a preparatory exercise, graphic organizers can help ELLs gain access into written text. Consider a fifth grade unit on civil rights. Figures 1 and 2 illustrate two graphic organizers that have been created to help ELLs understand the reading on the
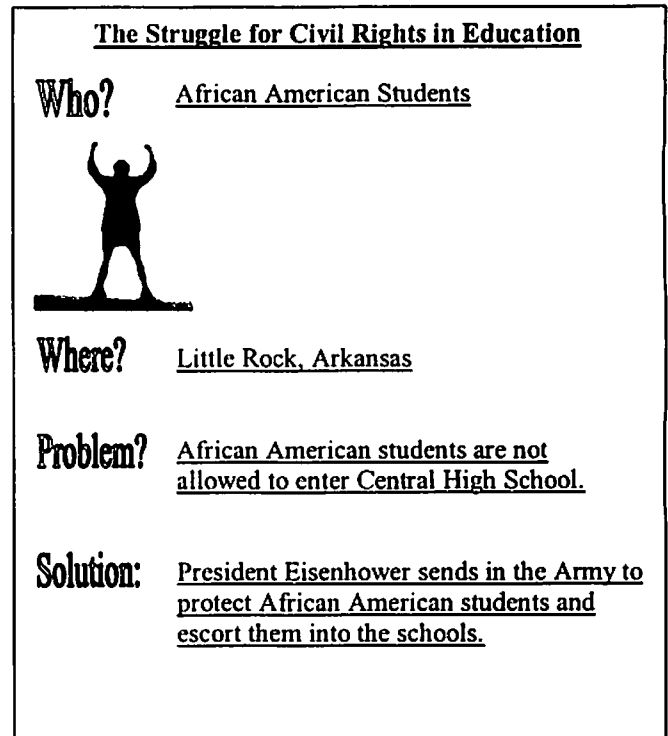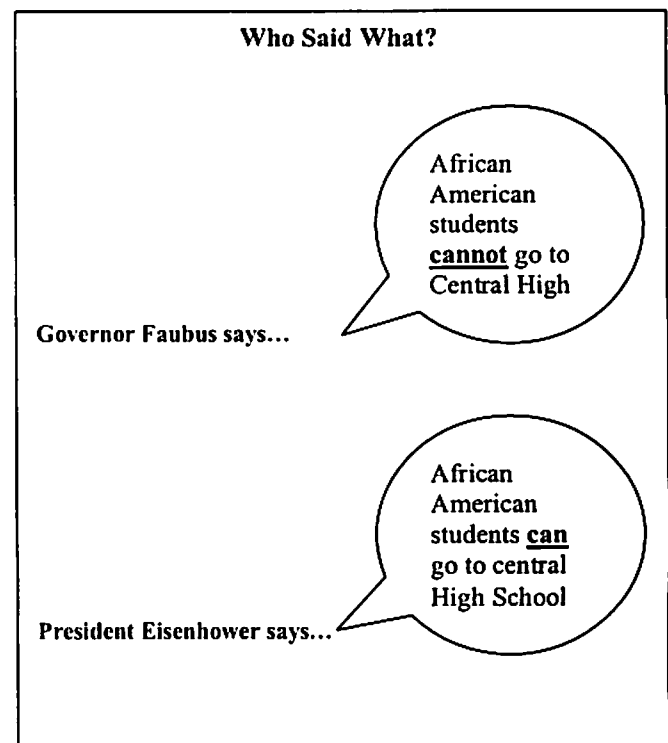

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figures 1. and 2. Fifth Grade Social Studies Unit, "Introduction to the American Civil Rights Movement" Michael Soares, Hill Central, New Haven, CT

class discussion about civil rights in education. Imagine how helpful this would be for the ELL who is faced with reading 8 pages in a social studies textbook and listening to a 40-minute class discussion (possibly an impossible task). With the help of these two graphic organizers, this same student could begin to make sense of the text and the class discussion, particularly if this student had the chance to read through these graphic organizers the night before the reading and class discussion were to be held.

Any information, no matter how complicated, can be reduced to an essential gist.

Figure 3 illustrates a simple chapter timeline designed by an ELL tutor to help a high school ELL in a mainstream class discussing the novel, *The Contender*. Before the tutor volunteered, this particular ELL student sat in the back of the high school English classroom, did not take part, and was failing. This student met with the ESL tutor once a week and, with the help of the timeline, began to make sense of the class discussion, so that by the end of the quarter, this student was able to express in a brief English paragraph "Sometimes I feel like a contender."

The graphic organizer in Figure 4 was designed to assist ELLs in understanding three important characters in Act 1, Scene 1 of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*. Notice that the graphic organizer focuses on a minimum number of vocabulary words and illustrates how to use those words to describe each of the characters. In this simple organizer, the ELL reader can begin to make sense of very complicated English language content.

Finally, the graphic organizer illustrated in Figure 5 was designed to help high school history students make sense of complicated written text about the historical occupations of Indochina. Some teachers ask, "But isn't that cheating?" Typically a graphic organizer

is a wonderful tool to help all students work through written text during or after the reading exercise. However, when practicing sheltered instruction before the reading assignment, a teacher can also use a graphic organizer that is already completely or partially filled out to help an ELL student gain access to complicated reading matter without which they would find the text almost impossible to access.

Some teachers ask, "But isn't that cheating?" or "I want them to taste the full flavor of the writer's work." Our response is this: They cannot access the text until they have developed proficiency in English. But they *can* access and ponder thoughts about the text if given access to the main ideas in the text. One author sometimes shares a piece of Russian poetry with teachers who ask this question and then asks them if they can taste the flavor. Of course, they cannot. Another response to this teachers' concern is this: Consider if you were in a busy train station in Paris, you did not speak French, and you needed help to determine how to get from one place to another. Would you prefer receiving a 15-page schedule guide

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Some teachers ask, "But isn't that cheating?"

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with no guidance, or would you prefer that the clerk hand you the schedule after first highlighting those portions that address your need and outlining for you the choices that you are seeking? Is this cheating? No, this is helping.
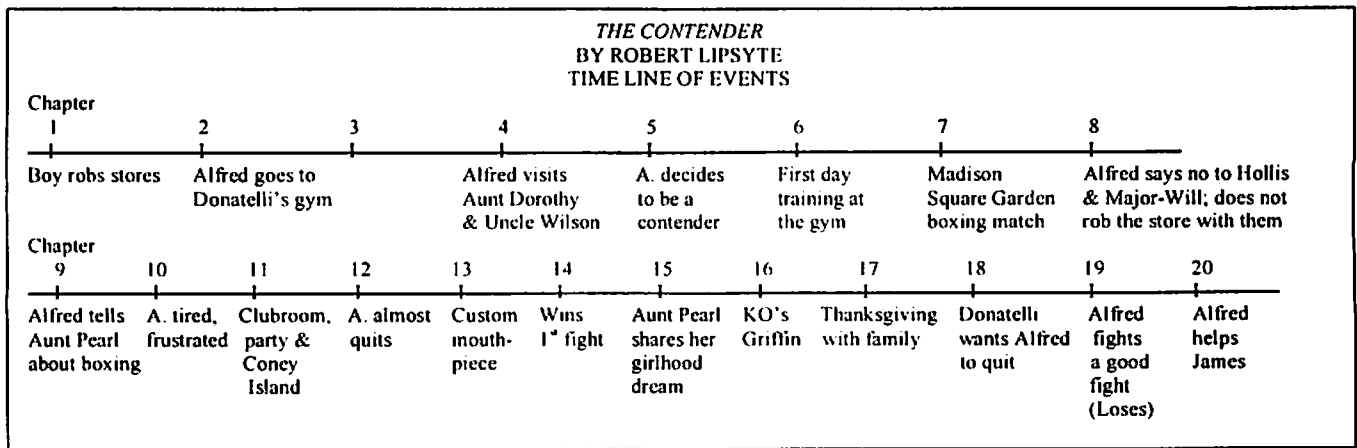
THE CONTENDER
BY ROBERT LIPSYTE
TIME LINE OF EVENTS

Chapter								
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Boy robs stores	Alfred goes to Donatelli's gym		Alfred visits Aunt Dorothy & Uncle Wilson	A. decides to be a contender	First day training at the gym	Madison Square Garden boxing match	Alfred says no to Hollis & Major-Will; does not rob the store with them	

Chapter											
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Alfred tells Aunt Pearl about boxing	A. tired, frustrated	Clubroom, party & Coney Island	A. almost quits	Custom mouth-piece	Wins 1st fight	Aunt Pearl shares her girlhood dream	KO's Griffin	Thanksgiving with family	Donatelli wants Alfred to quit	Alfred fights a good fight (Loses)	Alfred helps James

Figure 3. "The Contender" Time Line. Lorraine Pica, Wicomico County, Salisbury, Maryland

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Characters

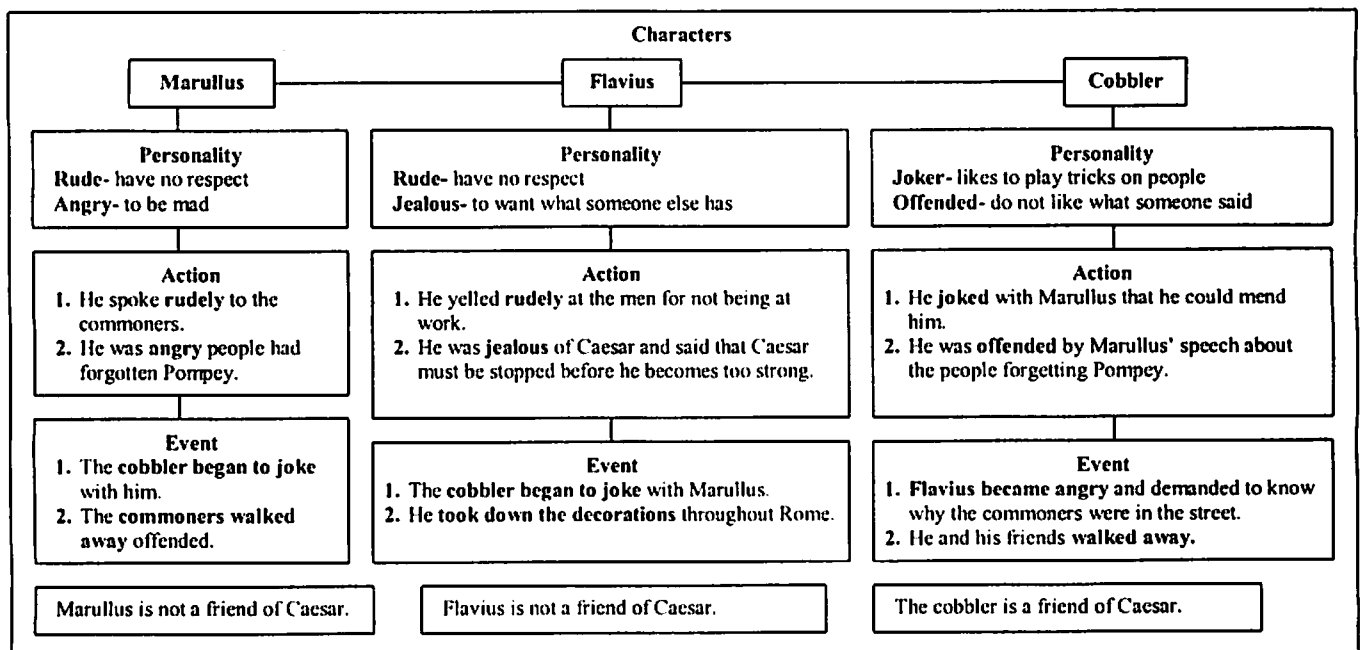| Marullus	Flavius	Cobbler
Personality Rude- have no respect Angry- to be mad	**Personality** Rude- have no respect Jealous- to want what someone else has	**Personality** Joker- likes to play tricks on people Offended- do not like what someone said
Action 1. He spoke rudely to the commoners. 2. He was angry people had forgotten Pompey.	**Action** 1. He yelled rudely at the men for not being at work. 2. He was jealous of Caesar and said that Caesar must be stopped before he becomes too strong.	**Action** 1. He joked with Marullus that he could mend him. 2. He was offended by Marullus' speech about the people forgetting Pompey.
Event 1. The cobbler began to joke with him. 2. The commoners walked away offended.	**Event** 1. The cobbler began to joke with Marullus. 2. He took down the decorations throughout Rome.	**Event** 1. Flavius became angry and demanded to know why the commoners were in the street. 2. He and his friends walked away.
Marullus is not a friend of Caesar.	Flavius is not a friend of Caesar.	The cobbler is a friend of Caesar.

Figure 4. Tenth Grade Language Arts Unit, "The Tragedy of Julius Caesar." Mary Johnson, Naugatuck H.S., Naugatuck, CT

Make an idea map for each country. Write the name of the country in the circle on the idea map. On the lines, write what the countries were doing in Indochina.

Example:

IDEA #1   FRANCE

When were the French in Indochina?
How long were they there?
Why were they there?

IDEA #2   CHINA

IDEA #3   UNITED STATES

Figure 5. Seventh-Twelfth Grade Unit, "Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case." Immacolata Testa, Vocational-Technical School System, Meriden, CT

Summary of handout #1 for beginner (and early production) ESL students

Indochina is made up of 3 countries: 1) Cambodia; 2) Laos; 3) Vietnam. By the 1800s, the Europeans became interested in this area and sent missionaries to convert the people to Christianity. This made the natives of the region angry. So the natives started to protest. When the French occupied the area, they sent more troops to stop the protests.

During the war between France and Germany, France was forced to remove some of their troops from Indochina. This "withdrawal" was followed by a Japanese invasion (and occupation). The Japanese occupation in Indochina lasted until the end of WWII. After the Japanese left, the "Viet Minh" Government took over the area.

Figure 6. Seventh—Twelfth Grade Unit, "Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case." Immacolata Testa, Vocational-Technical School System, Meriden, CT

Modified Text for Beginner and Early Intermediate ELLs

Japanese occupation

In World War II, Japan took over large parts of mainland Asia, but they left Indochina alone until 1940 when Germany invaded France back in Europe. It was too hard for France to defend their own country and Indochina at the same time, so when Japan asked to put troops in Indochina, France had to give in. (It also helped that Germany, which on Japan's side, was running France.)

France allowed Japan to put troops in Indochina while it (France) was fighting against the invasion of Germany

The Japanese were not really interested in Indochina; it was just a good place to keep troops and station headquarters. The French troops still there, however, were enemies of Japan, and they tried to fight the Japanese. The Japanese had a strong military and quickly put down any French fighters... but while this was keeping the occupiers busy, the Vietnamese were quietly getting ready for the end of the war. China helped one rebel group called the Viet Minh organize a government, while the former emperor of Vietnam, Bao Dai, was organizing his own government and appointing officials.

Japanese and French troops started fighting. Japanese soldiers were stronger. In the meantime, China was helping the rebel group (Viet Minh) to organize a Government and take over. And Bao Dai (former Emperor) was also organizing his own Government.

Figure 7. Seventh-Twelfth Grade Unit, "Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case." Immacolata Testa, Vocational-Technical School System, Meriden, CT. Original text: "Classroom activities." *Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case.* http://www.yale.edu/curriculum/units/2002/2/02.03.05.x.html.

Simplifying Text

Another way to make text comprehensible is to highlight important sentences, to write very simple summaries in the text margin, or to simply rewrite the gist of the text in very simple, reduced language. Figures 6 and 7 are examples of this sheltered strategy. Figure 6 illustrates how to summarize in the margins a complicated high school history text about Indochina's occupation. That same complicated text can be presented in a simplified, distilled paraphrase as illustrated in Figure 7.

The strategy of simplifying text is controversial. Some believe simplifying text denies the student the opportunity to develop a sophisticated vocabulary and to practice engaging with complicated, written text. This is a valid point if the simplified version were used in lieu of the authentic text. But, if the authentic text is made available and the simplified version is supplementary, then we argue that the simplified text helps students gain access to the authentic text. The margin summaries or highlighted versions of text are particu-

larly helpful for intermediate level ELLs in grades 4-12 when extensive reading is required. The fully rewritten, simplified summaries are recommended for ELLs who are just beginning to develop their English language abilities and therefore find the authentic text simply too complicated to access.

Vocabulary Development

One of the major difficulties for ELL students is the daunting task of developing a vocabulary sufficient in size to allow them to understand academic text and discussions.

Word banks are a powerful tool to assist language learners. It is not unusual to see words posted around language-rich classrooms to assist the ELL student. Figure 8 illustrates a word wall that has been designed for Chapter 2 of *Ramona Quimby*, for grade 3. But word walls should be not limited to elementary grade classrooms. Consider, for example, the algebra teacher who posts algebraic expressions around the classroom. Under each expression is the written way to say that
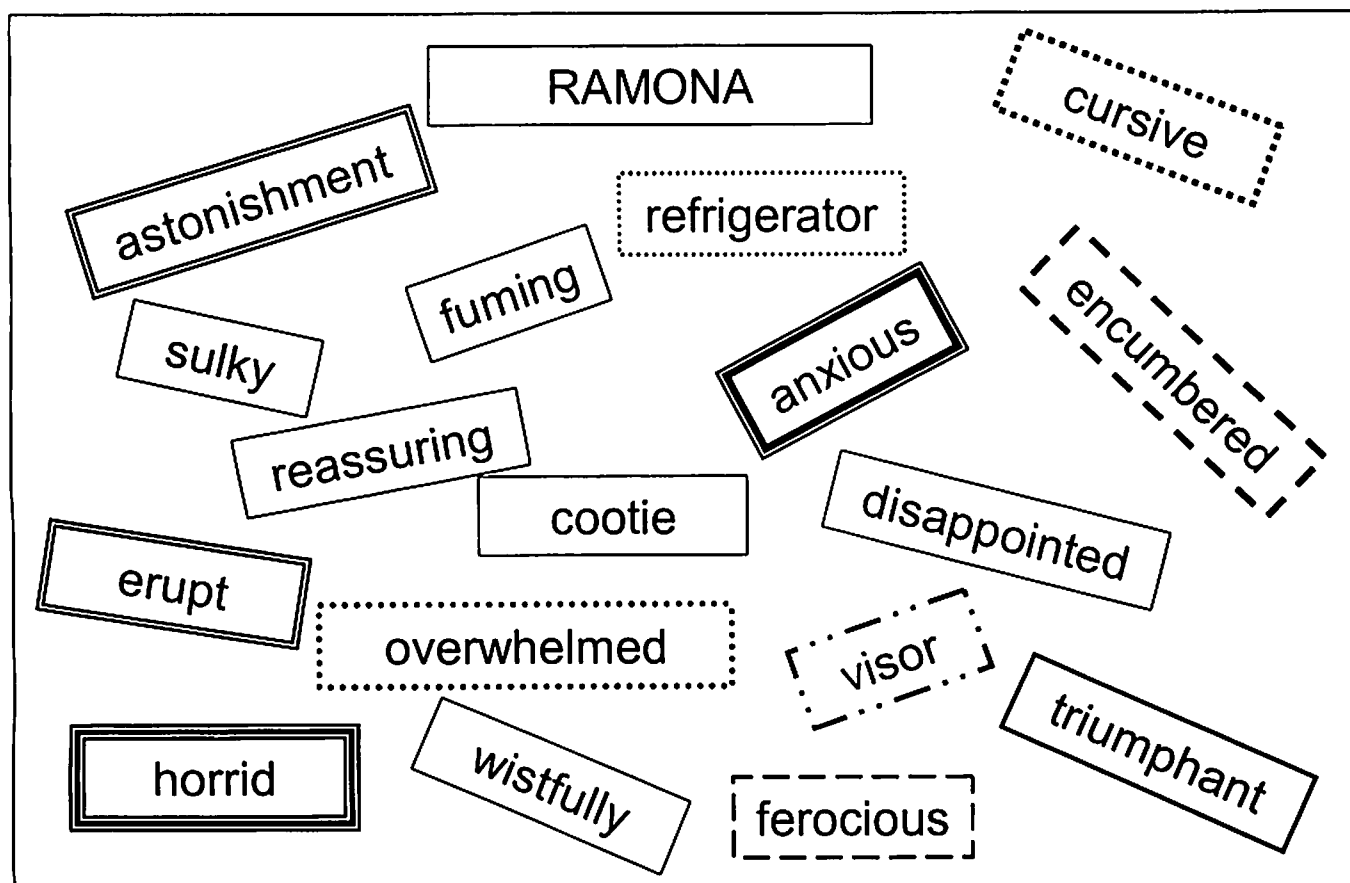

Figure 8. Third Grade Language Arts Unit, "Ramona Quimby Age 8," Chapter 2. Permission granted: Anonymous

expression in English. Then beneath the written English, the teacher has asked the ELL students to post ways to say that same algebraic expression in their native languages. If you ever have the chance to sit in a content classroom and experience a class in a language that is new to you, you will realize how frequently you will refer to the vocabulary posted on word walls to help you make the course content comprehensible.

A teacher who participated in our training modified the word wall strategy even further by taking 100 first-grade sight words and putting them on flash cards with visual images. "The students improved by leaps and bounds!" the teacher told her mentor. She plans to use the modified cards with all her students. She has shared a copy with all her teammates and will offer the cards to all the first-grade teachers in the district. The results of an evaluation given in September to three ELL students on these 100 words before modifications were: Student A, 41; Student B, 7; Student C, 9. In October, after the modifications, the results of the

evaluation were Student A, 72; Student B, 71; and Student C, 79.

Figure 9 is an illustration of another effective way to develop vocabulary. In this illustration, the teacher has identified key words on the drawing which accompanies the poem, *The Highwayman*. Note, also, that the teacher has summarized in the margins the key points of the text to help the readers make sense of the authentic text. Several books could be "marked up" in this fashion and kept on reserve for the ELL students who are mainstreamed into a teacher's classroom.

Another very important tool to make vocabulary comprehensible is to provide an abundance of visuals and realia to accompany text. For example, in an eighth-grade health class about the skeletal system, a teacher might bring in a skeleton or bone samples to illustrate bones, ligaments, cartilage, etc. But the teacher practicing sheltered instruction will also bring in a piece of elastic and a dried twig to help ELL students understand how young cartilage is "elastic-like" and aged cartilage becomes "brittle."

Figure 9. "The Highwayman," Patricia McGovern, New Haven, CT. Artist sketch: Robert E. Stoops

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Figure 9. "The Highwayman," Patricia McGovern, New Haven, CT. Artist sketch: Robert E. Stoops

Directions: As you watch the documentary, "Roots of War," circle any words you hear.

Any army of half a million.

Vietnam was an undeclared war.

A war without frontlines or clear objectives.

It was war with deep roots, deeper than most Americans knew.

Ho Chi Minh and his followers fought for decades against the French then against the Americans and their South Vietnamese ally.

It was the first war Americans opposed in huge numbers, openly and passionately.

The Vietnam War ended when the Communists took Saigon.

Two and one-half million Americans fought in Vietnam and 58,000 Americans died there.

Figure 10. Seventh—Twelfth Grade Unit, "Debating the Future of Indochina in 1945: Making Your Case." Immacolata Testa, Vocational-Technical School System, Meriden, CT

Listening Guides

Listening Guide: Level 1

The Layers of the Earth

1. The crust is made of soil.

2. The mantle is made of solid rock.

3. The outer core is made of melted metal.

4. The inner core is made of solid metal.

Figure 11.

Listening Guides

Listening Guide: Level 3

The Layers of the Earth

Write the name of the layer on the line and what that layer is made of below the line.

1. The layers of the crust are_____.

2. _____can be found in the layers of the crust.

3. As you move closer to the center of the Earth it gets_____.

4. The three types of rock are _____

_____.

Figure 12.

Figures 11. and 12. Third Grade Science Unit, "The Earth and the Moon." Amy Grammatica, Regional Multicultural Magnet School, New London, CT
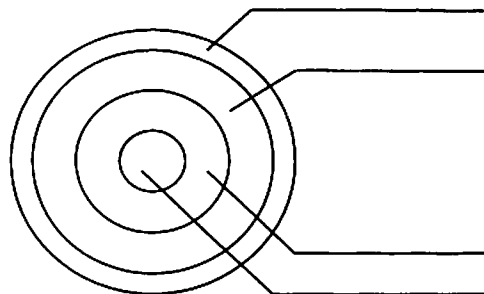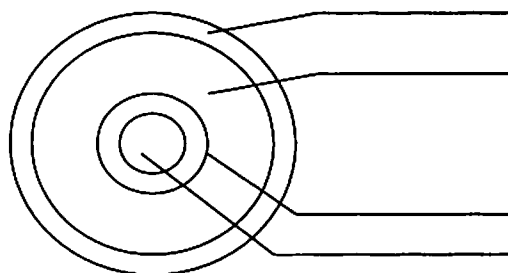
Listening Guides

So far, we have been looking at strategies to make written text comprehensible. Graphic organizers and vocabulary development techniques will also help make teacher talk and classroom discussions comprehensible. Listening guides are an additional tool to help ELL students make sense of classroom talk.

The listening guide in Figure 10 is used for early-level ELL students to make sense of the high school film on Indochina colonialism entitled *Roots of War*. Students who have access to this listening guide prior to the showing of the film can look up words they do not understand and can come to class with some understanding of what the film will cover. Notice that all the statements on the listening guide are true; thus the guide becomes a concise summary of the soon-to-be-seen film.

Figures 11 & 12 illustrate a listening guide that has been made to accompany a mini-lecture and discussion on "The Earth and the Moon." The top half of each guide is a graphic identical to the graphic on the board to which the teacher will refer and label during the mini-lecture. Students can label their copies at the same time. Notice, however, the difference on the

bottom half of each of these guides. Figure 11 is designed for the beginning ELL student who may need help just hearing these main ideas regarding the layers of the earth. Figure 12 illustrates the listening guide for the more capable ELL student who can listen to the discussion to determine what needs to be written into each of the blanks in the sentences describing the earth's layers.

Interpreting Meaning

* In our discussion please practice using different words from the word boxes.

It's like _____ .

| my memory of... |
| an experience I had where... |

I think _____ .

| a real community has... |
| stories help to tell... |

She's saying _____ .

| a real community.... |
| over time.... |
| people.... |

What she means is _____ .

| a real community... |
| people share... |

To me _____ .

| a real community... |
| my community.... |

Figure 13. First—Fourth Grade Social Studies Unit, "Neighborhoods of New Haven." Robin Gerber, Beecher Road School, Woodbridge, CT

Creating Opportunities for Student Interaction

After the content materials have been made comprehensible to the ELL, the next step is to ensure that the ELL has many opportunities to engage with the materials and to interact with the teacher and with other students about the course content. Given current space restrictions, we will limit our illustrations of this important aspect to a few select techniques.

Sentence Starters or Expression Prompts

By providing model sentences or model expres-

sions, we can empower ELL students to be able to express their own ideas. For example, Figure 13 illustrates a series of sentence prompts that will help ELL students reflect on, interpret, and share their ideas about the meaning of "community." With such models, an ELL student can construct sentences for oral presentation or for a written assignment.

Appropriate Questions for Levels of Language Proficiency

Finally, teachers can learn that even at the most beginning level of language proficiency, including the silent period of language development, students can still take part in thinking and sharing their thoughts about the course content. Simply by asking different types of questions to students of varying language proficiency, teachers can engage all ELL students. During the silent period, students can be asked to "point to," or "illustrate," or "show." For example, in a lesson on community designed by a Woodbridge, CT teacher, Robin Gerber, the teacher might ask students to "Point to the term *community,*" "Draw a picture of your community," or "What is in your community? Point to the pictures." To engage students who could not explain in words what was happening in a science class, one teacher found that the ELLs could draw the process correctly and thus show what they knew. The teacher then wrote the sentences to go with the process.

As students enter the early production phase of language development, teachers can ask yes/no questions, either/or questions, or one-word listing questions, such as. "Do you live in a real community?" or "Is this a picture of your community or Fidel's community?" or "Tell me one thing that you will find in your community." Finally, as students become more proficient and begin to share thoughts more openly, the student can be challenged interactionally by asking open-ended questions that require extended answers. These are the "how" and "why" questions like "How is this description like the community that you live in?" or "Describe one community that you are part of."

Many teachers find that sheltered strategies increase student participation. One teacher has conferences with students including more open-ended and higher level questions with her ELL students. Instead of getting the usual one- or two-word answers, the "students are more willing to elaborate about their

students have been able to express their own ideas and opinions."

While students are still developing their language skills, they can participate in "kinesthetic" class discussions that might not require much speaking but rely on more physical participation. This strategy is also useful for proficient speakers since it causes them to be silent, listen, think, and respond one-on-one to their classmates. One teacher comments on the value of this strategy:

> "I've always brought in realia, pictures, or used gestures when introducing new ideas or words, but the TPR (Total Physical Response) approach was something that I wasn't aware of. I now incorporate this approach whenever I can. I have used it to modify the KWI graphic organizer making them specific to each story. The students fill in one or two items and then move throughout the classroom asking each other questions about the reading as they fill in the rest of the chart. I'm amazed how much easier this is to do and how more engaged the students are during this activity. The students are getting the needed information, and at the same time, they are able to practice their English."

Teacher's Comments

What do the teachers say about learning some new strategies and modifying mainstream strategies for use by ELLs? Teachers, in general, comment that they were using only some strategies but that they could include many more. They comment on the effects of making the content comprehensible and on how effective the strategies were in engaging the students in the content.

Teachers who modify oral and written text report that students are more likely to learn to use these strategies for themselves. A science teacher found that the students incorporated the strategy of circling key numbers and phrases to help them pick out important information as she suggested to them. Now her students' papers regularly include key pieces of information circled.

One teacher felt that as a naturally rapid speaker, she needed to adjust her discourse and slow her pace. "The strategy of adjusting my discourse being a suc-

cessful strategy is evident by the increased participation and class discussion I now find during the reading period." This teacher has also become aware of the amount of teacher-talk-time versus student-talk-time. She says, "During the reading of the selected story for the Listening Comprehension portion of my class, I try to ask questions that will facilitate class discussion and then keep quiet, letting the students speak and build off each other's thoughts and ideas." Teachers who use peer tutoring have found that ELLs are able to participate more fully in the class. Students who are able to use their native language to exchange their ideas produced much more organized and comprehensible written work.

Our records indicate that teachers who modify their instructional strategies for ELLs find increased participation from students, higher scores on tests, and higher grades. They participate more fully in the educational process and feel more connected to their class. Teachers feel empowered to try new strategies as they experience successes with their ELLs. Teachers comment that their special education students and mainstream students benefit from sheltered strategies, too.

For Further Information

We have found several resources useful in our training sessions. For teachers wishing to read more about sheltered strategies we recommend *Sheltered content instruction: Teaching English-language learners with diverse abilities* (Echevarria & Graves, 2003) and *Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP Model* (Echevarria, J., Short, D. J., & Vogt, M., 2004). Several schools and districts we work with are undergoing comprehensive reforms. We are strong advocates for the ELL population and applaud the efforts of teachers and administrators who seek to engage ELLs in new ways. For a thorough overview of classroom strategies and school/district reform for ELLs, see *Inclusive pedagogy for English language learners: Research informed practices* (Verplaetse & Migliacci, in press) and *Access and engagement: Program design and instructional approaches for immigrant students in secondary school* (Walqui, 2000).

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Instructional Anchors for English Language Learners: Lessons Learned, Lessons Shared

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As a teacher educator and literacy researcher, I have the opportunity to investigate effective instructional practices and communicate them to teachers. Currently, my focus is on helping regular classroom teachers support the language and literacy development of their English language learners (ELLs). While few preservice teachers set out to attend to this population, most will be challenged to effectively serve English language learners who are the fastest growing group entering U. S. public schools (National Clearinghouse for Bilingual Education, 2002; U.S. Department of Immigration and Naturalization Service, 1999). Teachers must be ready—proactively prepared to address language differences in their classrooms. What does such readiness entail?

As stated in the theme of this issue, English language learners are immersed in a flood of educational expectations. Teachers can certainly help their struggle of English language learners and all students in my room.

More Parental Involvement

Novice teachers may fear the prospect of having parents, especially linguistically and culturally diverse parents, visit their classrooms. However, I strongly encourage all teachers to open their doors to their students' parents, particularly those parents who know the least about how classrooms function and how schools are organized. It is critical that parents understand how the students spend their day, know the kinds of social and academic challenges that their youngsters confront, and see how the school's resources are utilized to help children learn.

I recommend that teachers strive to meet and speak with their students' parents early in the year. If parents do not come to the school, I would call or visit

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to survive by offering "flotation devices" and guiding students to "safe islands" when they need to restore themselves. I would offer another nautical metaphor. I see some components as "anchors" to effective classroom practice. I would like to share here what I think are fundamentally sound and critically important components for effective language support in elementary classrooms. These recommendations are the result of some recent classroom observations, an ongoing literature review of effective practices, and reflection on my own teaching experiences. They are, to me, best practices that provide a solid, stable foundation for student progress. If teaching an elementary grade level, I would institute each of these into my regular instruction as ways to secure the development

the parents inviting them to visit the school and the classroom. Immigrant parents need to learn how schools in the United States function and how to help their children learn successfully in them. Some parents may be greatly inconvenienced to come to the school and may be uncomfortable speaking to the staff. I recommend always welcoming parents into the classroom when they come to school, stopping what you are doing when they come, and listening patiently to their concerns regardless of how awkward is their use of English. Showing respect in these ways can encourage parents and students to be more involved in school. Then, when students have difficulties or special needs, the teacher can solicit the cooperation of more informed parents and work to solve problems

collaboratively.

Asking parents to help prepare materials, supervise small groups, or share cultural practices will allow them to contribute to instruction; and, in turn, parents can learn about grade-level curriculum, classroom norms, and hear age-appropriate academic language. Perhaps most importantly, parents learn that they can be informed and involved in the educational process. Such parent participation may not have been the norm in their former cultural contexts.

More Classroom Conversations

English language learners simply do not talk enough in most classrooms (Chaudron, 1988; Laosa, 1979). They tend to be passive and withdrawn. But, in order to develop English fluency, these are the students who need to talk the most. Despite the fact that school personnel often strive to keep students quiet, classroom teachers who want to promote English-language acquisition must find ways to get their students to orally participate. Instead of rewarding the quiet students, teachers must plan for ways to get students talking.

As a classroom teacher, I once started the school year with the most cherubic Latino boy I had ever seen. His name was Omar. He spoke practically no English, but he had a wide grin and observant eyes. To help him, I gave Omar a special dispensation that I explained to the students during the first week. I told the entire class that Omar's main job was to learn English; and for him to do so, I was imposing a special rule: Omar could talk to anyone anytime he wanted. There would be no exceptions to the rule until he learned English well. A few students said the rule was not fair, but I encouraged them to understand that if Omar had to do his work in English, he needed to first speak it. I encouraged them to see themselves as his language teachers and reminded them that they would not be in trouble for talking with Omar. With the students' support, we agreed that we would share the task of helping Omar. I flanked his desk with the friendliest, most talkative students. I even eventually gave him the job of being in charge of the playground equipment—an enormously important position among first-graders!

Well, Omar had a great year! He felt special: He felt important, and he learned incredible amounts of English. In fact, at the end of the year, Omar scored on grade level on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills. Years later, he was also named King of the Prom from among his senior class. In his speech, he thanked me and his first-grade experience for helping him to learn English so quickly. Omar was a talking success story!

The point is—classroom teachers need to find ways to engage English language learners in talk—in the hall, on the playground, during instructional discus-

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sions, and at odd times during the day when there is time to chat and ask personal questions. At one effective school I visit regularly, the classroom teachers stand at the door each morning and personally welcome each student. They use the time to make personal connections and to start the day with a positive exchange. They ask how the student is doing, follow up on concerns, and share family news. They encourage the students to talk about what they know best—themselves.

Teachers must also find ways to elaborate on students' comments—no matter how brief or incoherent (Mohr & Mohr, 2005). Teachers should videotape themselves during classroom discussions and review the instruction to determine ways to better engage their more reticent students and encourage more elaborated use of English. Are students' comments extended? Are their questions clarified? Are they given choices when they don't seem ready to give an answer? For example, if a student cannot answer how to solve a math problem, a teacher can ask whether addition or subtraction is the correct operation, thus giving the student some language support rather than moving on to another to give a correct answer. One rule of thumb would be to always follow up an ELL's remark with a question, an elaboration, an explanation, or a sign of appreciation. In addition, planning for well-structured, small-group work in which ELLs mingle with fluent English speakers can communicate that learning is

largely social and being social means talking a lot in class. I recommend assigning learning buddies for tasks such as studying spelling words, checking math problems, and making lists. Assigning triads and quad groupings for other tasks give ELLs opportunities to practice English in a variety of configurations. I have also found that students' writings will be much more elaborate if students talk extensively before they begin writing.

Double-Edged Thematic Units That Target Language Structures

When I worked as an ESL teacher, I would discuss with classroom teachers the topics and units of instruction they were planning for their grade levels. Whenever possible, I would reinforce the themes or topics during my pull-out instruction. However, I would double-up the theme with a special language/vocabulary focus. In other words, when the theme was Springtime Activities, I might also focus on auxiliary verbs and sports terminology, generating lessons that helped students use helping verbs to describe their Springtime Activities. Students drew pictures (e.g., sticker stories, Mohr, 1999) and wrote in the present progressive tense. For example, "I am playing at the park. I like to go down the slide. I am having fun with my family and friends. We like to go to the park on Sundays."

Doubled themes help accomplish English-language development and academic content. The vocabulary that is covered is given context and relevance. These

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dual goals should be evident in all lessons planned for ELLs. Without a planned focus on academic language, teachers are not facilitating the process of cognitive academic language processes (CALP) that take so much more attention and time to develop compared to the conversational competencies that are acquired more readily (Cummins, 2001).

As teachers plan academic instructional units, they should consider the related vocabulary and key language functions that are required of the studied topics. For example, when studying dinosaurs, it is necessary to speak in the past tense and use polysyllabic words. When we study community helpers, we need to use a lot of compound words and two-word labels, such as policeman, firefighter, trash collector, city hall. It would be appropriate to address such language constructions and list such terms on a special word wall to serve as a reference for students during subsequent lessons. Teachers could also plan word sorts and phonological processing tasks that use the theme-related terms and language structures.

Shared Reading of Expository and Multicultural Texts

English language learners need comprehensible input (Krashen, 1987). In addition to lots of meaningful verbal stimuli, students need visual input. The best way to combine these supportive elements is to read informational texts to students. Regardless of age, ELLs can benefit from well-selected books that are read aloud in class. The teacher's fluent, prosodic reading and the visual graphics support comprehension and encourage interaction with books that model academic language. Currently there is a strong emphasis on facilitating the use of academic language among English learners (Zwiers, 2005). Expository books on almost any subject can augment instruction, and I wouldn't teach a day without featuring such as a part of my instruction.

Of course, teachers should also read narrative texts. Fortunately, there are many wonderful multicultural books to share with students. Multicultural texts can be mirrors or windows through which students see themselves or others who take on the world and learn in the process. Teachers can learn about different cultures from multicultural literature and model this resource when they share it with their students. Sharing expository texts regularly with strong doses of multicultural literature provides a healthy diet for learning about the world.

Sharing the English Language System

Although immersed in the English language during their classroom instruction, English language learners may not readily *discover* the structure of the English-language system (Huie & Yahya, 2003). Other first

languages may be quite different from English in alphabet, vocabulary, and syntax (Birch, 2002). One value of including phonemic awareness and phonics instruction is that ELLs are given explicit instruction on the phonemes and graphemes that govern the oral and written language codes. While using letters and sounds to learn to read and write, students may also be refining their pronunciation skills and increasing their knowledge of school-based vocabulary. Phonics instruction makes the English language more transparent and organized. Otherwise, students can believe that English is a very arbitrary collection of sounds and symbols. Teaching youngsters that English vowels are very important letters helps learners notice them more carefully. Although there are only five vowel letters, they have

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> ### *One of the most productive elements of instruction I could recommend would be to use some form of interactive writing.*

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several sounds, or "jobs" and can be difficult to distinguish. Paying special attention to English vowel sounds and the way they pair with other letters (vowel digraphs, r-controlled vowels, and diphthongs) can help students understand how English vowels function and encourage them to pay more attention to the language as an orthographic system.

Another way to provide explicit instruction of the English language system is to present vocabulary in word webs. For example, the teacher may feature the word *friend* and show students how other terms relate such as: *friendly, friends, friendship, unfriendly, and friendliness.* Providing such word groups demonstrates that English is connected and that prefixes and suffixes are important aspects of English morphology. Students should not be expected to figure out these associations on their own. Instead, ELLs can be shown that successful reading involves reading by analogy. For example, the skills a learner uses to read (and write) the word *like* can then extend to reading *hike, Mike, likes, liked,* and *alike.*

Guided or Interactive Writing

Perhaps one of the most productive elements of

instruction I could recommend would be to use some form of interactive writing for English language learners two or three times a week (Mohr, 2003). Interactive writing involves the teacher working with students to develop a piece of writing and to discuss both the content and the form as it is recorded by the teacher (McCarrier, Pinnell, & Fountas, 2000). Having students tell what they know about how to write about a topic and to see the teacher model the writing process is a powerful scaffold for students who need strong, early support in writing English. Of course, these shared compositions afford the students a text that they can then read in accordance with the Language Experience Approach (Nelson & Linek, 1998).

I conduct these guided writing sessions by sharing an interesting picture and having students use their English skills to describe it. Then I ask students to help me write a few sentences about the picture. I solicit student help with spelling, capitalization, and punctuation while recording the agreed-on sentences. Then, I have the students reread the sentences and highlight graphophonic elements that have been studied. After this shared analysis, I take away the written sentences and dictate them to the students who write them down as best they can. They are also encouraged to add more sentences and to illustrate the sentences. This 30-minute process has been very productive in ameliorating ELLs' spelling and writing fluency. It also affords small-group discussion of interesting scenes and shares an analysis of English that supports early reading and writing instruction.

Poetry Patterns

Writing in a second language can be difficult, tedious work. One way to make it more enjoyable and more successful is to share with students model texts that serve as frames or patterns for writing formats. Rather than being responsible for both format and content, using poetry patterns allows students to focus on what they want to express rather than how to organize it. Making reading to writing connections, like patterning Bill Martin's (1983) *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See* or Judith Viorst's (1981) *If I Were in Charge of the World and Other Worries,* allows students to mimic successful texts until they are ready to explore more personalized formats.

Writing poetry can also be more economical than other writing genres. Poetry is also less dependent on standard syntax. These are attractive allowances for

English language learners. Getting their ideas down on paper and then arranging the phrases according to a poetry model is often a user-friendly way to participate in the writing process. A common structure used with elementary students is the diamante, a diamond-shaped poem that consists of specific parts of speech. See the following example.

by all cultures because in many places people do not sense that they have much control over their futures. They face limited opportunities and cannot easily rise beyond present circumstances that include poverty, unemployment, limited educational experiences, or inadequate health conditions. Even when able to come to the United States to seek a better life, some immi-

Water ———————	Noun
Clear, gentle ———————	Two adjectives describing noun subject
Bubbling, meandering, flowing ———————	Three participles related to subject (-ing,/-ed)
Current, cascade, whirlpool rapids ———————	Four subject-related nouns, in logical sequence
Pouring, drenching, driving ———————	Three participles showing change in noun subject
Angry, destructive ———————	Two more strong adjectives describing subject
Torrent ———————	Synonym or subject transformed

Customized Technology Activities

During some recent observations of mainstream classrooms hosting ELLs, I was disappointed to see less-than-productive use of computers for supporting students' language development. Most often in these cases, teachers assigned students to classroom computers as a station or center while the teacher performed literacy assessments or worked to guide students in small reading groups. However, the work that the students did on the computers often was simple, math games. With a bit more planning, the English language learners could have been extending their vocabularies, exploring word meanings, composing sentences for student-generated illustrations, and even refining their pronunciation of English via voice-supported technologies. While it is a challenge to keep up with current software, it is important that students who are perhaps least likely to have computers at home have sufficient time to develop their computer literacy at school. There are many creative products that allow students to learn computer skills while practicing English.

Future Talk

Our mainstream American culture is future-minded. Teachers and schools tend to promote the middle-class notion that we should work in the present to plan for the future. This cultural value is not shared

grants might think that all they have wanted has come true. They may not yet have a clear picture of their potential selves and futures. But, schooling is ultimately a futuristic institution. It exists to prepare students for opportunities. Teachers and schools serve to communicate how to envision and prepare for the future. I believe strongly that teachers should speak often of the future. This means talking about why learning something is important and how it might be applied. Futuristic talk can give students a reason to learn and build optimism and hope among learners. Hopeful students are more persistent learners. They are better problem-solvers and make connections more readily than those who do not see how the present efforts will help them in the future. ELLs are in particular need of futuristic communication, and teachers are the ones most able to show the future to them.

One of the greatest compliments I ever received came from a group of young ELLs who worked in a pull-out program with me. The group included some very clever and sociable learners who seemed to feel successful and as if they belonged to a system that was getting them ready for a bright future. I recall an uplifting conversation with this group of second-grade English language learners after lunch one day. Here is my paraphrased version:

S1: I like having ESL after lunch.

T: Why is that, Jorge?

S1: ESL is after lunch and it is nice, so it's like having dessert.

T: Wow, what a nice thing to say about ESL. And I like the way you said it; you are so clever, Jorge. Thank you.

S2: Yeah, ESL is good for us, but some dessert is not good to eat.

S1: We won't have too much ESL, just what we need to be good at school. It can help us do good in the world.

T: Yes, I want you to be good at school and to do good in the world. I hope ESL can help you with that—to have sweet success! So, I guess it is like a dessert.

To launch ELLs into an optimistic future, we can use instructional anchors that stabilize and strengthen their experiences in school. My hope is that more teachers will consider the recommended practices presented here or reported in related resources to support and encourage students often considered at-risk for failure. ELLs need to be more prepared and hopeful about their futures in our academic system. Classroom teachers play a critical role in this exciting process.

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