**Four orientations to learning** (after Merriam and Caffarella 1991, p. 138)


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Theory”</th>
<th>Behaviorist</th>
<th>Innatist/Nativist</th>
<th>Cognitivist</th>
<th>Interactionist and Dialectical Constructivist</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning theorists</td>
<td>Pavlov, Skinner</td>
<td>Chomsky</td>
<td>Piaget</td>
<td>Bandura, Lave and Wenger, Vygotsky, Bruner</td>
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<tr>
<td>View of the learning process</td>
<td>Change in behaviour</td>
<td>Internal mental process—you have a “Language Acquisition Device” LAD to help you learn grammar</td>
<td>Internal mental process (including insight, information processing, memory, perception)</td>
<td>Interaction /observation in social contexts. Movement from the periphery to the centre of a community of practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Locus of learning</td>
<td>Stimuli in external environment</td>
<td>Internal cognitive language learning device—we are biologically programmed to learn language</td>
<td>Internal cognitive structuring</td>
<td>Learning is in relationship between people and environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose in education</td>
<td>Produce behavioural change in desired direction</td>
<td>Allow students to “figure out” language and processes on their own</td>
<td>Develop capacity and skills to learn better</td>
<td>Full participation in communities of practice and utilization of resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educator’s role</td>
<td>Arranges environment to elicit desired response</td>
<td>Provides language rich environment</td>
<td>Structures content of learning activity</td>
<td>Works to establish communities of practice in which conversation and participation can occur through the students’ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manifestations in language learning</td>
<td>imitation and habit forming of language, practice</td>
<td>you come to “know” certain things about language simply by being exposed to a limited number of examples</td>
<td>Cognitive development</td>
<td>Social participation, construction of knowledge &amp; language through interaction with support meant to help the student build on his/her own linguistic knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>mimicry, repetition</td>
<td>“It’s all in your mind”</td>
<td>Intelligence, learning and memory as function of age</td>
<td>“Know yourself, know others”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Say What I Say”</td>
<td></td>
<td>Learning how to learn</td>
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</table>
During the 1970s and 1980s, a Canadian linguist, James Cummins, did extensive research on how people acquire language. The majority of his studies were done in Quebec centering around the French-English programs. One of the first observations made by Cummins was that there are two dimensions of language: conversational and academic. The terms used to describe these dimensions are **BICS** (Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills) and **CALP** (Cognitive Academic Linguistic Proficiency).

When a child first begins to speak and eventually enters school, he/she arrives with BICS in L1, the child’s *first language*. This is the language used at home, on the playground, it’s knowledge of basic survival communication. When we chat with our friends about the events of the weekend, we are using BICS. When your child relates to you the results of the soccer game, that is also BICS. It is expected that children entering school at the Kindergarten level come with a fully developed BICS, basically, that’s a receptive and expressive vocabulary, of about 2500 words.

With that dimension at a functioning level, the school can then proceed to expand and build upon that knowledge to develop CALP, the academic dimension of language that is necessary for school success. CALP is used to explain cell structure, to summarize a reading selection, write a research paper on habitats, to take any academic test. Therefore, if a student has BICS in one language and learns to read in that language and then uses that language in thinking and analyzing, the student develops relatively clear relationships between speech and print and between language and thought. Thus, for a student to be both socially and academically successful in a language, these two dimensions need to be developed. In short, the degree of success that a student will experience in school is positively associated with the extent of the development of both BICS and CALP.

**BICS + CALP = academic success**

What is meant by academic success? Globally, we can say that a student is able to compete successfully with the average native language speaker in the same peer group. It is important to recognize, however, that the native speakers, too, are advancing and they become a moving target for the second language student to reach.

**ICEBERG MODEL**

Let’s look at two other ways to illustrate the importance of developing BICS and CALP, two models also developed by James Cummins and used extensively by other researchers in the field. One is called the Iceberg Model. If we imagine language proficiency as an iceberg, there are two levels. Above the surface of the water would be conversational proficiency including the cognitive processes of knowledge, comprehension and application. Regarding language processes, one would find pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar. Below the surface of the water lies the academic proficiency which includes the cognitive processes of analysis, synthesis and evaluation. The language processes located here would be both functional and semantic meaning. To achieve complete language proficiency one would need to develop both parts of the iceberg.
FOUR QUADRANTS

Understanding that the development of both BICS and CALP is crucial to academic success then poses the question of how to develop those areas at home and/or at school. A visual of four quadrants can be introduced at this point. The horizontal line is labeled context-embedded moving towards context-reduced. The vertical line is labeled cognitively undemanding moving towards cognitively demanding. The easiest way to understand each quadrant is to place some tasks within each. Our goal, of course, is to move the student through all the quadrants with quadrant d being tied to academic success.

Quadrant A would include such tasks as art, music, physical education, activities that are very much hands-on and visual.

Quadrant B would offer math computation, science experiments, social studies projects, activities that are visual yet tied to content.

Quadrant C can be a telephone conversation, a note on a refrigerator, written directions without examples, all of these demanding a much higher cognitive level for comprehension to occur.

Quadrant D would allow the student to take a test, present a research paper, listen to a lecture and understand abstract concepts.

One can see there is a progression from the more visual, less content based tasks to much more language dependent content based tasks. This progression takes time as mentioned in the section on important variables to remember regarding language development. To develop both BICS and CALP to ensure academic success could take up to seven years.

INPUT AND ANXIETY

Often, people view language only as a skill to be learned and that acquisition has really very little to do with the process of language development. Intertwined are psychological development, emotional stability and command of the language. It is impossible to separate one from the other. In light of that, Stephen Krashen, a linguist, has said “language is the function of comprehensible input and a low affective filter.” This means that in order for language to progress, a student needs to be comfortable in the language environment and feel very little anxiety. If the language student is frustrated or anxious, a barrier is put up, and very little will pass through.

It is important to be aware of several factors: do NOT force production of the new language. Language emerges naturally, through stages (Tracy Terrell), and we must be aware of the stages and allow the student to produce when he is ready, not when we think he should. The environment for language learning needs to be pleasant, non-threatening and welcoming with many visuals to foster questioning and interest. Third, students developing language naturally make errors and we must accept those errors. What is important to applaud is that the student is making every effort to communicate and "getting the message across" is what is key. It is important to acknowledge the attempt and offer correction by way of modeling.

TIMELINE FOR DEVELOPMENT

Just how long does it take for a child to be in control of the language? Many people listen to children speak and feel they are quite proficient, yet proficiency does not imply that the more complex academic language needed to engage in classroom activities is present. Research studies
consistently indicate that it can take from 5-7 years of language study before one is considered to be proficient. Often, students are assumed to be proficient orally, yet the lack of that proficiency is seen in reading comprehension and written work. Our goal is to develop students who are both fluent (able to express their message) and accurate (express the message using correct structure and syntax). Often, a lack of proficiency can be traced back to limitations in oral development.

**ACQUISITION AND LEARNING**

What do these two terms mean? Acquisition is a subconscious process and may involve a listening period of up to two years. Often, mimicry of sounds and words, is the first sign of acquisition. One can acquire BICS if they live in a foreign country. Many of the survival words are just "picked up" in daily living. Learning a conscious process. To learn a language, one must be in a formal learning situation, listen to tapes, be deliberately taught a task. Please note that formal reading and writing are taught only after oral proficiency is achieved. In the natural order of language development the order is listening, speaking, reading, writing.

**TYPES OF BILINGUALISM**

*James Cummins* has stated that the degree of L1 and L2 development could influence the student's intellectual development. You can differentiate the degree of bilingualism by the following categories:
- **balanced bilingual** defined as someone who is highly developed in two languages,
- **dominant bilingual** defined as someone who is partially developed in only one language
- **double limited bilingual** defined as someone who is limited in two languages
- **auditory comprehensive style bilingual** is defined as someone who has listening comprehension, but doesn't have the skill to express himself orally, a passive bilingual
- **conversational style bilingual** is defined as someone who can speak, but cannot read or write
- **reading and writing style bilingual** is defined as someone who cannot converse, but can read and write

Let’s look at how one can attain a level of bilingualism. A person can consecutively develop two languages (additive process). After becoming proficient in one language, the person begins the process in the second language. The simultaneous model calls for two languages to be developed at the same time. These types of development are positive for intellectual growth. A negative development calls for the absence of the maintenance of the first language when a second language is added (subtractive process).
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Language Development Stage</th>
<th>Sample Student Behaviors</th>
<th>Sample Teacher Behaviors</th>
<th>Questioning Techniques</th>
<th>Ways to get the student involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Beginning**              | • Points to or provides other non-verbal responses  
• Actively listens  
• Responds to commands  
• May be reluctant to speak (Silent period) but if they do speak, use one or two word utterances (often high frequency words or memorized words)  
• Understands more than can produce  
• Uses non-linguistic representations to show understanding  
• May demonstrate little or no awareness of English print conventions  
• Use primarily present tense  
• Begin to recognize environmental print in English | • Gestures  
• use TPR (Total Physical Response)  
• Language focuses on conveying meaning and vocabulary development  
• Repetition (for both pronunciation and meaning making)  
• Does not force students to speak  
• Uses visuals and visual cues  
• Write key words on the board as you say them and have students follow along/copy  
• Use multimedia for language practice (read along)  
• Use interactive dialogue journals | • Point to the...  
• Find the...  
• Put the ___ next to the ____.  
• Do you have the ___?  
• Is this a ___?  
• Who wants the ___?  
• Who has the ___? | • Student may be able to draw or create models  
• label items in the room  
• copy notes from the board  
• make lists  
• choral reading |
| **Intermediate**           | • Understand routine directions and short, simple conversations on familiar topics  
• Identify and distinguish key words  
• Seek clarification in English when they do not understand  
• Express simple, original messages and participate in short conversations or with more “wait time”  
• Demonstrate an emerging awareness of English grammar  
• Demonstrate limited reading comprehension unless stories are predictable or on highly familiar topics and include visual supports  
• Still struggle with some sounds in English words and English spelling (for reading & writing)— orthographic awareness is developing  
• Can explain briefly and simply their writing in English  
• Can participate meaningfully in shared writing when the topic is familiar and concrete  
• Will commit errors that show interference from their first language (i.e. grammar or pronunciation)  | • Ask questions that can be answered by yes/no and either/or responses  
• Models correct responses and with complete sentences (elaborates)  
• Ensures a supportive, low anxiety environment  
• Does not overtly call attention to grammar errors  
• Provides background information for topics discussed in class, including reading & writing topics  
• Begins with topics students know and areas of strength—slowly moves towards the abstract with support  
• Play games like charades or “I have, who has?” and other linguistic games  
• Role-play | • Yes/no (Did the character solve his/her problem in the story?)  
• Either/or (Is this a screwdriver or a hammer?)  
• One word responses  
• General questions which encourage lists of words  
• Two-word responses (Where did she go? To school.) | • Student may be able to repeat or echo readings  
• act out various activities  
• teach classmates words in his/her native language  
• write journal entries with a mix of text and image  
• use “cloze” techniques or other supports while reading and writing |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Advanced</strong></th>
<th><strong>Fosters conceptual development and expanded literacy through content</strong></th>
<th><strong>What would you recommend/suggest?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Students may be able to teach the class about his/her home country</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participates in small group activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continues to make lessons comprehensible and interactive</strong></td>
<td><strong>How do you think this story will end?</strong></td>
<td><strong>demonstrate or model ways of solving math problems, etc. in his/her home country</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Demonstrates comprehension in a variety of ways—understands longer discussions and main points but may need additional processing time</strong></td>
<td><strong>Teaches organizational, thinking and study skills</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is the story mainly about?</strong></td>
<td><strong>interview others</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speaks in short phrases and sentences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Continues to be alert to individual differences in language and culture</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is your opinion on this matter?</strong></td>
<td><strong>work in small and large groups and participate fully in all class activities</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Begins to use language more freely—participate comfortably in most conversations and discussions on familiar topics.</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spells in short phrases and sentences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Describe/compare</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adapted from CAL and TELPAS materials by Minda Lopez, Ph.D.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Has a grasp of basic grammar features (present, past, future tenses)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uses expanded vocabulary</strong></td>
<td><strong>How are these similar/different?</strong></td>
<td><strong>Students may be able to be the scribe or reporter for a group</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>You may see this student overgeneralize and make errors in grammar and meaning because of it</strong></td>
<td><strong>Asks open-ended questions that stimulate language production</strong></td>
<td><strong>What would happen if?</strong></td>
<td><strong>contribute more to class discussions, especially after “think/pair/share” or other small group interactions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Know enough English to develop and demonstrate elements of grade-appropriate writing in English but may need added support when topics are abstract, academically challenging or unfamiliar</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Which do you prefer?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Advanced High</strong></th>
<th><strong>Focuses on key concepts</strong></th>
<th><strong>Why?</strong></th>
<th><strong>Student may be able to be the scribe or reporter for a group</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participates in reading and writing activities to acquire new information</strong></td>
<td><strong>Provides frequent comprehension checks</strong></td>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td><strong>contribute more to class discussions, especially after “think/pair/share” or other small group interactions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understand longer, elaborated directions, conversations and discussions with little dependence on visuals and other cues</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uses center or performance-based assessment</strong></td>
<td><strong>How is this like that?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rarely require the speaker to repeat, slow down or rephrase</strong></td>
<td><strong>Uses expanded vocabulary</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tell me about...</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use English at a level of complexity and detail nearly comparable to that of native English-speaking peers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Asks open-ended questions that stimulate language production</strong></td>
<td><strong>Describe</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Written errors are minor and usually limited to low-frequency words and structures; errors rarely interfere with communication</strong></td>
<td><strong>Spells in short phrases and sentences</strong></td>
<td><strong>Talk about...</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Have an ability to decode and understand grade-appropriate English text at a level nearly comparable to native English speaking peers</strong></td>
<td><strong>Asks open-ended questions that stimulate language production</strong></td>
<td><strong>How would you change this part?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from CAL and TELPAS materials by Minda Lopez, Ph.D.
Language Acquisition

Grammar-Translation Method
- Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early
- Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis
- Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue
- Little or no attention is given to pronunciation

Direct Method
- Classroom instruction is conducted exclusively in the target language
- Only everyday vocabulary and sentences are taught
- Oral communication skills are built up in a carefully graded progression organized around question-and-answer exchanges between teachers and students in small, intensive classes
- Grammar is taught inductively
- New teaching points are introduced orally
- Concrete vocabulary is taught through demonstration, objective, and pictures; abstract vocabulary is taught by association of ideas
- Both speech and listening comprehension are taught
- Correct pronunciation and grammar are emphasized
- Emphasis is on natural language acquisition
- Involved demonstration by teacher on role playing through active use of pictures, films, tapes, and other visuals
- Stress is placed on total immersion in second language with no use of the first language

Audio-Lingual Method (based on Behaviorist theories)
- New material is presented in dialogue form
- There is no dependence on mimicry, memorization of set phrases, and over learning
- Structures are sequenced by means of contrastive analysis and taught one at a time
- Structural patterns are taught using repetitive drills
- Little or no grammatical explanation; grammar is taught by inductive analogy rather than deductive explanation
- Vocabulary is strictly limited and learned in context
- There is much use of tapes, language labs, and visual aids
- Great importance is attached to pronunciation
- Very little use of the mother tongue by teachers is permitted
- Successful responses are immediately reinforced
- Great effort to get students to produce error-free utterances
- Tendency to manipulate language and disregard content
The Silent Way
- Learning is facilitated if the learner discovers or creates rather than repeats what is to be learned
- Learning is facilitated by accompanying (mediating) physical objects
- Learning is facilitated by problem solving involving the material to be learned

Suggestopedia
- Emphasis is placed on childlike experimentation with the new language
- There is a strong use of the second language in explanations and discussions
- Encourages lack of inhibition and natural language acquisition
- Authority figure decides instructional program
- Use of music and highly suggestive materials
- Use of breathing techniques for relaxation
- Use of games and hands-on activities
- Use of role playing

Total Physical Response (TPR)
- Useful for both adults and children in early stages of second language learning
- Teacher gives commands and models the physical movement to carry out the command
- Focus is on listening and comprehension by responding to commands with appropriate physical movement in early stages
- Adds body movements to the acquisition of structures and vocabulary
- Establishes a relationship between student and teacher as “expert knower” and “learner” respectively
- The learner moves through levels of competency described as “not knowing, to value, to self-worth, to wholeness”
- Hopefully, the learner becomes a member of a learning community that works together as a cohort of learners of the second language

Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA)
- Focus is on academic skills in the content areas
- Supported by cognitive theorists
- Useful for ESL students that have developed Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS)
- Useful for foreign students who have developed Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) in their primary language and need assistance in transferring concepts and skills to the second language
- Uses learning strategies unique to the CALLA Approach

Natural Approach
- Emphasis is on the generality of the acquisition process
- Techniques focus on providing context in the classroom for natural language acquisition to occur in order to acquire the maximum comprehensible input
- Emphasis is placed on speech through the creations of low-anxiety situations (affective filter)
- Recognizes the difference between BICS and CALP

Sheltered Instruction/SIOP (S.I. Observation Protocol)
- Compilation of many research based second language acquisition methods, techniques and strategies
• Content and language objectives are included in each lesson; language is taught through content area instruction, not as a separate subject
• Uses hands-on activities, graphic organizers, visuals, realia, modeling, cooperative learning as tools for effective learning
• Higher order thinking skills are included and key

Critical Pedagogy
• Teacher listens to get to know the students and begins to dialogue, then moves to action
• Students are taught how to confront the forces in life that keep them passive
• Students challenge power structures
• Teachers are careful not to impose their own worldview
• Teachers and students communicate as “co-learners”

Drama
• Role play provides a physical/emotional context for learners to acquire new language
• Playacting enables learners to take risks that they would normally not take as themselves

Games
• Work to low the affective filter
• Enable students to use second language in meaningful and purposeful ways that facilitate acquisition

Jazz Chants
• Enable students to practice the rhythm, intonation and natural nuances of language
• Music reduces the affective filter
• Rhythm and music facilitate the memorization of words, images, and ideas

Helping ESL students understand what they read

Every day in school and at home ESL students have many different texts* to read. [* The word texts is used here to refer to all kinds of reading material that ESL students have to deal with; e.g., textbook passages, worksheet questions, short stories, Internet articles, etc.] It is through reading that they acquire much of their knowledge and understanding of the different subject areas, and reading often forms the basis of follow-up work such as class discussions or homework questions. For these reasons it is essential that ESL students are helped as much as possible and necessary to understand what they read. Many ESL students, often with their parents’ help, waste a great deal of precious time trying to make sense of texts that are too difficult for them. It is not unusual for a student to pore over a text for a couple of hours with a dictionary and still not understand it very well. Yet with a little assistance their frustrating reading experience can be turned into a more profitable one.

The purpose of this article therefore is to suggest to mainstream teachers how they can help the ESL students in their classes to become more effective readers. Firstly, I list some of the factors that can make texts difficult to understand. And secondly, I suggest ways that the texts that students are expected to read, e.g. in textbooks, can be made more accessible to them.

What makes texts difficult to understand?

- **Illegibility**
  A first, obvious difficulty relates to the legibility of a text. ESL students may have problems that are caused solely by the fact that what they are trying to understand has been poorly printed or copied, is badly set-out or is in a very small type-face.

- **Unfamiliar Words**
  A written message may be difficult to understand because it contains many words that are unknown to the student. In the following text, for example, the instruction is simple but the language in which it is expressed is not:

  You are requested to desist from masticating gum in this establishment.

- **Lack of Background Knowledge**
  Another difficulty arises in cases where the necessary background knowledge is missing. Unless the student has a basic understanding of statistics, for example, there is little point him/her looking up the unknown words in the following passage since the definitions are unlikely to further comprehension.

  To minimize two unknowns we differentiate with respect to each variable in turn treating the other variable as a constant. The process is called partial differentiation and the notation used is standard.

- **Difficult Concepts**
  The next difficulty can be seen in texts such as the following:

  The appeal of the view that a work of art expresses nothing unless what it expresses can be put into words can be reduced by setting beside it another view, no less popular in the theory of art, that a work of art has no value if what it expresses can be put into words.

  The words in themselves are not unduly difficult and no special background knowledge is required, but the concept expressed in the passage is complex.

- **Complex Syntax**
  The above text about art is also difficult because of its syntactic complexity. In general, long sentences containing subordinate or embedded clauses tend to be less immediately intelligible than shorter, simpler ones. For example, the second instruction below is probably more readily understood than the first, which contains an embedded participial clause!

  Explain clearly using at least three different reasons or drawing three diagrams why McClelland lost the battle.

  Explain clearly why McClelland lost the battle. Give at least three reasons or draw three diagrams.

- **Advanced cohesion**
  Cohesion refers to the way writers link phrases, clauses and sentences into a coherent whole. However, a mature and pleasing style can be impenetrable to language learners. In the pairs of sentences below, the first one in each case will probably be more difficult to understand than the second:
John bought a red pencil and Mary a blue one.

The killer whale tosses the penguin into the air and generally torments its prey before it eats it. The killer whale tosses the penguin into the air and generally torments the penguin before eating it.

- **Poor Writing**

The final source of difficulty is associated with the many different manifestations of poor writing. For example, a text may be difficult because the ideas are not organized logically, or because punctuation is lacking, faulty or ambiguous, or because cohesion is slipshod. The following extract, taken from a recent IB Computing Studies exam, has an example of poor cohesion.

> A **bar code is often found on produce sold in supermarkets and, by means of a bar code reader, a computer can directly identify that item.**

The student may fail to realize that ‘that item’ refers to ‘produce’.

Any one of the above difficulties alone may interfere with comprehension, but when they occur in combination - such as in texts with complex syntax and unfamiliar vocabulary - the chances of an ESL student readily understanding the text are very much reduced.

**How to help students understand what they read in textbooks**

Some of what your students have to read will be prepared by you, and there is detailed advice elsewhere on this teacher's site to help you produce comprehensible worksheets and tests. Much of what the students have to read in your subject, however, will come from textbooks or, more recently, from the Internet. Clearly, you have no control over the content and style of these passages; what you can do however is to decide whether or not to use the text at all with your students, or with your ESL students. Alternatively, you could choose to rewrite the text to make it more accessible. (This is a complex, time-consuming process, and your ESL teacher will be happy to advise or do it for you!)

Assuming you want to use a difficult passage from a textbook as it is, there are various strategies that students can apply to ensure that they have a better chance of understanding. Some of the more common ones are SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) and KWL (What do I know, What do I want to know, What have I learned) or other kinds of graphic organizer. The most important aspects of these various reading strategies are summarized in the following list:

- **Make sure that students understand why they are reading the text and what they will have to do afterwards.** ESL students often believe they need to understand every word of a text, whereas in many cases they can fulfill the task requirements by scanning or skimming through the passage. Having a clear reading purpose helps them to focus more efficiently on the information they need to extract.
- **Ensure that students have the necessary background information before they are asked to read long texts.** It is most important that they have a chance to focus on the topic and activate their existing knowledge of it before being confronted with the text. This often provides the opportunity to pre-teach essential vocabulary contained in the text.
- **Encourage students to read up about the topic beforehand, or discuss it at home with their parents, in their own language.**
- **Have students predict the information they will find out in the text.**
- **Ask students to write questions that they would like to have answered by the text.**
- **Introduce some key vocabulary from the text.**
- **Have students predict the vocabulary they will meet in the text.**
- **Remind students of the importance of looking at headings, diagrams, and illustrations and their captions.**
- **Tell students to note parts of the text that they could make no sense of.** (They can later ask you or another student to explain it to them.)

One more piece of advice: Many textbooks are organized around a unifying principle so that each chapter follows the same pattern. It is helpful to make sure that students know their way around the book, particularly if it contains a glossary. Much of this above advice is standard practice because it is good for all students, not just ESL students. However, in mainstream classes, as in ESL classes, the emphasis should be on training students to apply these reading strategies independently where possible. It does not help in the long run if they expect to be “walked through” every difficult text they encounter.
Classroom strategies: Pre-reading and reading

Oral language activities

Before doing an activity or reading a story in class, teach pre-selected vocabulary words. This is always helpful, especially for ELLs. This will give them the chance to identify the word, place it in context, and remember it. You can pre-teach vocabulary by playing with words and using English as a second language (ESL) methods such as:

- Role playing or pantomimig
- Using gestures
- Showing real objects
- Pointing to pictures
- Doing quick drawings on the board
- Using the Spanish equivalent and then asking students to say the word in English

Phonemic awareness

Phonemic awareness is the ability to understand that spoken words are composed of smaller units of sound. Phonemic awareness helps children begin to understand how the English and/or Spanish alphabets work. You can teach phonemic awareness through activities such as:

- Finding objects in the classroom whose names begin or end with the same sound, such as desk, door, and dog.
- Doing clapping activities to identify the syllables in words
- Learning poetry and songs that have the same beginning sounds or end in rhyme
- Analyzing each other's names to make discoveries about letters and sounds such as "Whose name starts with B? Whose name has an "a"? Whose name has an "r"? Show me where you found it.
- Making charts about letter/sound discoveries (For example: "Here are three new letters. Let's write some words under each letter.")

Alphabet knowledge

Once students have learned the sounds, they can begin to learn the names of the letters. For ELLs, it is easier to hear the sounds first and then label each letter. You can teach the alphabet through songs accompanied with movements that outline each letter (For example: "A is for alligator. Make your arms open and shut like the mouth of an alligator. B is for bat...") There are books and tapes in most bookstores with alphabet songs and motions.

Concepts of print

"Big books" are ideal for showing children how books work. After reading a big book, you can point out concepts of print such as:

- The book’s front and back covers, title, and author
- The left-to-right direction of print
- What a word looks like – and what the space between words looks like
- The fact that you are reading the words
- How inflection and intonation are used to connect content and structure of the text
- The differences between question marks, exclamation marks, and periods

Listening comprehension

Reading out loud to your students is a way to teach vocabulary while modeling reading. As you read aloud:

- Introduce the characteristics/elements of the story (characters, setting, problem, solution, plot)
- Explain words, topics, or concepts that ELLs may not be familiar with
- Model how a reader self-corrects when making a mistake
- Think aloud about what you are reading
- Provide opportunities for children to retell the story they heard through dramatic retellings; or use picture cards to put the story's events in sequence.

### Decoding and comprehension

During the second half of the year, ELLs in kindergarten benefit when they are introduced to reading through sequenced decodable books. Simple decodable books allow ELLs to read engaging and interesting stories even though they may only know a few letter sounds. These books may include some sight words they can memorize such as the words "was" or "happy" as the stories build on previously learned letters, sounds, and words.

First, conduct guided reading so that students follow along in their books while you model fluency. You can help student comprehension by clarifying concepts, teaching unknown words, asking questions about the story, and letting children connect these stories to their own experiences.

After the guided reading, have students reread their decodable books with a partner. They can take turns reading by alternating sentences. This helps them focus on what they are reading. Reading with a partner also creates a safety zone where they can feel comfortable reading aloud.

### Other ideas

Here are some other things you can do:

**Use chants, short poems, or songs as transition markers from one activity to another, or when children line up for recess or lunch.**

Use thematic units, such as "plants." This helps children learn vocabulary faster because they hear the same words (all about plants) in the stories the teacher reads, in what they read, and in their learning centers and other activities.

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Reading

Reading is a process of getting meaning from print. Early reading includes the direct teaching of words and sounds. Children must be able to distinguish between different sounds of oral language to achieve understanding. They also need basic knowledge about the written alphabet, sound-symbol relationships, and concepts of print because these are the basis for decoding and reading comprehension skills.

How reading relates to ELLs

For English language learners (ELLs), success in learning to read in English in the first grade depends on several factors: (1) In kindergarten, were they exposed to reading in English or in their primary language? (2) Did that exposure include ample vocabulary development? In which language? (3) Were they exposed to the sounds of the language (phonemic awareness), the alphabet, sound-letter relationships (phonological awareness), decoding, and comprehension skills? In which language? Click here for ways to assess your ELL students.

If the level of oral language proficiency in English or Spanish is high, and decoding skills have been taught, learning to read first grade texts will be easier. If the student did not attend kindergarten or was not exposed to a rich language development program and pre-reading skills, a first grade teacher will need to begin with building these kindergarten skills.

The good news is that research has shown that students can develop oral language and reading skills simultaneously. In fact, the more students read, the more language they learn. And when they are regularly taught vocabulary, they will become more fluent readers and have better comprehension skills.

Classroom strategies: For teacher read alouds

Oral language activities

Before, during, or after reading a story in class, teach vocabulary words. This is a must in order for students to understand what they are reading. Students need to know at least 90 - 95 percent of the words they are reading in order to comprehend the text. You can pre-teach vocabulary by using English as a second language (ESL) strategies such as:

- Role playing or pantomiming
- Using gestures
- Showing real objects
- Pointing to pictures
- Doing quick drawings on the board
- Using the Spanish equivalent and then asking students to say the word in English

Listening comprehension

Listening to stories read aloud by the teacher is one effective way for students to enrich vocabulary. It is also an easier way for you to introduce comprehension skills such as the main idea and cause and effect because the students are not having to do the arduous work of decoding, learning new words, and trying to comprehend the story while also attempting to think about elements of the story.

You can do this through discussions with students or by thinking aloud about what might be the main idea or the cause and effect in a section you just finished reading. When reading aloud to ELLs:
• Show and read the front and back pages of the book, as well as the dedication or table of contents page.
• Use pictures, maps, objects, or drawings on the board.
• Provide background knowledge on concepts that students will need to comprehend the story.
• Introduce the characteristics/elements of the story (characters, setting, problem, solution, plot).
• Pre-teach five to six key words they will encounter frequently and will need to use for the discussions.
• Model how a reader self-corrects when making a mistake.
• Think aloud about what you are reading; stop every once in a while and summarize what you have read so far.
• Provide opportunities for students to summarize or retell the story through dramatic retellings; or use picture cards to put the story's events in sequence.

**Classroom Strategies - For student reading**

**Decoding and comprehension**

ELLs benefit when they are introduced to reading through sequenced decodable books that build on previously learned letters, sounds, and words. These books start out combining only a few consonants and vowels. Simple decodable books allow ELLs to read engaging and interesting stories even though they may only know a few letter sounds. Fast-paced lessons can include activities for hearing sounds in words, identifying the sounds associated with specific letters, and blending letter sounds into words. You can conduct these phonics activities through games and chants in which the whole-class responds.

After you review the sounds that students will encounter in their decodable books, conduct guided reading so that students follow along in their books as you model fluency. Read the selection again, stopping frequently to help student comprehension by clarifying concepts, teaching unknown words, asking questions about the story, and letting children connect these stories to their own experiences.

After the guided reading, have students reread their decodable books with a partner. They can take turns reading by alternating sentences. This helps them focus on what they are reading because each student only reads a small chunk. Reading with a partner also creates a safety zone where they can feel comfortable reading aloud.

**Other ideas**

Here are some other things you can do:

*Use thematic units such as “communities” or “dinosaurs” or “the environment.” This helps children learn vocabulary faster because they hear the same words in the stories the teacher reads, in what they read, and in their learning centers and other activities.*

*Use cooperative learning activities to provide more opportunities for ELLs and all students to develop oral language and social skills. Even if all the students in a classroom or group are limited in English, they will still benefit from practicing with their peers. For more on cooperative learning activities, click here.*

**Classroom strategies: Fluency**

**Word knowledge**

Fluency problems for ELLs begin with limited word knowledge. Some ELLs appear to read with accuracy in decoding but have poor comprehension. They buzz through a passage and read the words, but pay little attention to sentence juncture or other punctuation. When asked what they read, they usually respond, "I don’t know." These students have developed decoding skills but may not know the meaning of enough words in the sentence or passage to understand it. If your students
don't know the meaning of at least 90 - 95 percent of the words they are reading, they may not comprehend the text.

Other ELLs read in a slow and labored word-by-word manner. Their reading rate may be around 50-60 words per minute. These students need help not only with word knowledge but also with decoding.

You can teach word knowledge either before reading (highlighting key words and their meanings) or during your teacher read alouds by using an English as a Second Language (ESL) strategy (described below) when a potentially unknown word is encountered. You can preview the text to be read by you or the students themselves and select five to six words that are likely to stifle comprehension for ELLs. You can quickly highlight Tier 1 words (everyday words that all English speakers know but not ELLs) and Tier 2 words (grade-level words that all students need to know) through ESL strategies such as:

- Role playing or pantomiming
- Using gestures
- Showing real objects
- Pointing to pictures
- Doing quick drawings on the board
- Using the Spanish equivalent and then asking students to say the word in English

If words are more abstract and do not lend themselves to these strategies (Tier 2 and 3 words), you can follow these steps for each word:

1. Select the word from the text or conversation beforehand.
2. Explain meaning with student-friendly definitions.
3. Provide one or two examples of how it is used.
4. Ask students to repeat the word three times.
5. Engage students in activities to develop mastery by using the word in similar examples. Click here for a variety of strategies to engage the student in using the word.
6. Have students say the word again.

### Listening comprehension

Listening comprehension is when you read aloud to your students and they listen. As you read aloud, model reading fluency and enrich the ELLs' receptive and expressive vocabulary. You can also introduce comprehension skills such as rereading to clarify meaning, finding the main idea, and thinking about cause and effect. This is a great opportunity for ELLs to learn these skills because they are not having to do the arduous work of decoding, learning new words, and trying to comprehend the story while also attempting to think about the messages of the story – all at the same time. They can learn these skills through discussions with you or by listening to you thinking aloud.

### Partner reading for fluency and comprehension

After you model reading fluency and reading strategies, students can take turns reading the same passages aloud in pairs. Each partner takes turn reading one sentence. Alternating sentences between partners helps them focus on what they are reading. Reading with their partner also creates a safety zone where ELLs can feel comfortable through the trials and errors of reading aloud. After they read a paragraph or two, they should stop and summarize together what they read.

### Other ideas

After students finish their partner reading, you can use cooperative learning strategies such as "Numbered Heads Together":

- Ask students to sit in teams of four and number off.
b. Pose a question and ask students to put their heads together to discuss the answer.

c. All four students must be prepared to give the answer because they don't know whose number you are going to call.

d. Randomly select a number and ask students with that number to stand and give the answer (be sure to have at least four questions on hand so that every student has an opportunity to answer).


Formative and Summative Assessments in the Classroom

By Catherine Garrison & Michael Ehringhaus

Downloaded from:
http://www.nmsa.org/Publications/WebExclusive/Assessment/tabid/1120/Default.aspx

Using Formative Assessments to Individualize Instruction and Promote Learning

Testing vs. Teaching: The Perceived Impact of Assessment Demands on Middle Grades Instructional Practices

Assessment Resources
Successful middle schools engage students in all aspects of their learning. There are many strategies for accomplishing this. One such strategy is student-led conferences. As a classroom teacher or administrator, how do you ensure that the information shared in a student-led conference provides a balanced picture of the student’s strengths and weaknesses? The answer to this is to balance both summative and formative classroom assessment practices and information gathering about student learning.

Assessment is a huge topic that encompasses everything from statewide accountability tests to district benchmark or interim tests to everyday classroom tests. In order to grapple with what seems to be an over use of testing, educators should frame their view of testing as assessment and that assessment is information. The more information we have about students, the clearer the picture we have about achievement or where gaps may occur.

Defining Formative and Summative Assessments
The terms "formative" and "summative" do not have to be difficult, yet the definitions have become confusing in the past few years. This is especially true for formative assessment. In a balanced assessment system, both summative and formative assessments are an integral part of information gathering. Depend too much on one or the other and the reality of student achievement in your classroom becomes unclear.

Summative Assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what students know and do not know. Many associate summative assessments only with standardized tests such as state assessments, but they are also used at and are an important part of district and classroom programs. Summative assessment at the district/classroom level is an accountability measure that is generally used as part of the grading process. The list is long, but here are some examples of summative assessments:

* State assessments
* District benchmark or interim assessments
* End-of-unit or chapter tests
* End-of-term or semester exams
* Scores that are used for accountability for schools (AYP) and students (report card grades).

The key is to think of summative assessment as a means to gauge, at a particular point in time, student learning relative to content standards. Although the information that is gleaned from this type of assessment is important, it can only help in evaluating certain aspects of the learning process. Because they are spread out and occur after instruction every few weeks, months, or once a year, summative assessments are tools to help evaluate the effectiveness of programs, school improvement goals, alignment of curriculum, or student placement in specific programs.
assessments happen too far down the learning path to provide information at the classroom level and to make instructional adjustments and interventions during the learning process. It takes formative assessment to accomplish this.

Formative Assessment is part of the instructional process. When incorporated into classroom practice, it provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. In this sense, formative assessment informs both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when timely adjustments can be made. These adjustments help to ensure students achieve, targeted standards-based learning goals within a set time frame. Although formative assessment strategies appear in a variety of formats, there are some distinct ways to distinguish them from summative assessments.

One distinction is to think of formative assessment as "practice." We do not hold students accountable in "grade book fashion" for skills and concepts they have just been introduced to or are learning. We must allow for practice. Formative assessment helps teachers determine next steps during the learning process as the instruction approaches the summative assessment of student learning. A good analogy for this is the road test that is required to receive a driver's license. What if, before getting your driver's license, you received a grade every time you sat behind the wheel to practice driving? What if your final grade for the driving test was the average of all of the grades you received while practicing? Because of the initial low grades you received during the process of learning to drive, your final grade would not accurately reflect your ability to drive a car. In the beginning of learning to drive, how confident or motivated to learn would you feel? Would any of the grades you received provide you with guidance on what you needed to do next to improve your driving skills? Your final driving test, or summative assessment, would be the accountability measure that establishes whether or not you have the driving skills necessary for a driver's license—not a reflection of all the driving practice that leads to it. The same holds true for classroom instruction, learning, and assessment.

Another distinction that underpins formative assessment is student involvement. If students are not involved in the assessment process, formative assessment is not practiced or implemented to its full effectiveness. Students need to be involved both as assessors of their own learning and as resources to other students. There are numerous strategies teachers can implement to engage students. In fact, research shows that the involvement in and ownership of their work increases students' motivation to learn. This does not mean the absence of teacher involvement. To the contrary, teachers are critical in identifying learning goals, setting clear criteria for success, and designing assessment tasks that provide evidence of student learning.

One of the key components of engaging students in the assessment of their own learning is providing them with descriptive feedback as they learn. In fact, research shows descriptive feedback to be the most significant instructional strategy to move students forward in their learning. Descriptive feedback provides students with an understanding of what they are doing well, links to classroom learning, and gives specific input on how to reach the next step in the learning progression. In other words, descriptive feedback is not a grade, a sticker, or "good job!" A significant body of research indicates that such limited feedback does not lead to improved student learning.

There are many classroom instructional strategies that are part of the repertoire of good teaching. When teachers use sound instructional practice for the purpose of gathering information on student learning, they are applying this information in a formative way. In this sense, formative assessment is pedagogy and clearly cannot be separated from instruction. It is what good teachers do. The distinction lies in what teachers actually do with the information they gather. How is it being used to
inform instruction? How is it being shared with and engaging students? It's not teachers just collecting information/data on student learning; it's what they do with the information they collect.

Some of the instructional strategies that can be used formatively include the following:

*Criteria and goal setting with students engages them in instruction and the learning process by creating clear expectations. In order to be successful, students need to understand and know the learning target/goal and the criteria for reaching it. Establishing and defining quality work together, asking students to participate in establishing norm behaviors for classroom culture, and determining what should be included in criteria for success are all examples of this strategy. Using student work, classroom tests, or exemplars of what is expected helps students understand where they are, where they need to be, and an effective process for getting there.

*Observations go beyond walking around the room to see if students are on task or need clarification. Observations assist teachers in gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional planning. This evidence can be recorded and used as feedback for students about their learning or as anecdotal data shared with them during conferences.

*Questioning strategies should be embedded in lesson/unit planning. Asking better questions allows an opportunity for deeper thinking and provides teachers with significant insight into the degree and depth of understanding. Questions of this nature engage students in classroom dialogue that both uncovers and expands learning. An "exit slip" at the end of a class period to determine students' understanding of the day's lesson or quick checks during instruction such as "thumbs up/down" or "red/green" (stop/go) cards are also examples of questioning strategies that elicit immediate information about student learning. Helping students ask better questions is another aspect of this formative assessment strategy.

*Self and peer assessment helps to create a learning community within a classroom. Students who can reflect while engaged in metacognitive thinking are involved in their learning. When students have been involved in criteria and goal setting, self-evaluation is a logical step in the learning process. With peer evaluation, students see each other as resources for understanding and checking for quality work against previously established criteria.

*Student record keeping helps students better understand their own learning as evidenced by their classroom work. This process of students keeping ongoing records of their work not only engages students, it also helps them, beyond a "grade," to see where they started and the progress they are making toward the learning goal.

All of these strategies are integral to the formative assessment process, and they have been suggested by models of effective middle school instruction.

Balancing Assessment
As teachers gather information/data about student learning, several categories may be included. In order to better understand student learning, teachers need to consider information about the products (paper or otherwise) students create and tests they take, observational notes, and reflections on the communication that occurs between teacher and student or among students. When a comprehensive assessment program at the classroom level balances formative and summative student learning/achievement information, a clear picture emerges of where a student is relative to learning targets and standards. Students should be able to articulate this shared information about their own learning. When this happens, student-led conferences, a formative assessment strategy, are valid. The more we know about individual students as they engage in the learning process, the better we
can adjust instruction to ensure that all students continue to achieve by moving forward in their learning.

References


HOW ARE DIFFERENT ESL PROGRAMS CLASSIFIED?

ESL program designs can be broadly categorized as either stand-alone ESL or ESL-plus. In general, stand-alone ESL programs group LEP students together and instruct them in a manner similar to that used in foreign language classes. The focus of the program is primarily linguistic. Stand-alone ESL programs operate solely for LEP students who are taken out of their regular classroom environment and placed in a setting where their need for instruction in and about English can be addressed in a special way (Ohio State Dept. of Education, 1987). Stand-alone ESL programs usually operate for small portions of each school day, although in some less-than-ideal circumstances, they may operate less, with students receiving special instruction only two or three times a week.

ESL-plus programs may include a component of special instruction in and about English (like the stand-alone programs) but generally go beyond the linguistic scope to focus on content area instruction, which may be given in the student's native language or in English. ESL-plus programs generally serve students for a longer portion of the instructional day than stand-alone programs, and in some instances represent the student's entire instructional program.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF STAND-ALONE ESL PROGRAM DESIGN?

--Pull-out (generally used in an elementary setting). The student is pulled out of the regular classroom for special instruction in ESL. This pull-out instruction may be provided by teachers who are assigned to just one building (where the number of students needing instruction is large enough), or it may be provided by one teacher who travels to several schools to serve small numbers of children scattered throughout the district (Chamot and Stewner-Manzanares, 1985). Students from different first-language backgrounds may be separated into groups for instruction. The teacher may or may not be trained in ESL (O'Malley and Waggoner, 1984), and is generally not bilingual.

--Class period (generally used in a middle or secondary school setting). Students receive ESL instruction during a regular class period, generally receiving credit for the course, just like any other course taken in a departmentalized setting. Students may be grouped according to their level of English proficiency. The teacher is generally not bilingual (Ohio State Dept. of Education, 1987).

--Resource Center. A variation of the pull-out design, the resource center brings students together from several classes or several schools. The resource center generally is an "enriched" version of the pull-out design, with materials and staff being concentrated in one location to provide a wider variety of language instruction and experiences. Students may be pulled out of their regular classrooms for one or more periods of ESL instruction. The resource center is generally staffed with at least one full-time ESL teacher, who may or may not be bilingual (Ohio State Dept. of Education, 1987).

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF ENGLISH-PLUS PROGRAM DESIGN?

--Bilingual Education Programs (used either at the elementary or secondary level (Seelye and Navarro, 1977). Bilingual programs are classified as "early transition" or "late transition" programs, depending on the criteria used to determine whether students can succeed in an all-English curriculum. In early exit programs, students are mainstreamed primarily on the basis of oral English proficiency. In "late transition," students are mainstreamed on the basis of English proficiency--including reading and writing--sufficient for sustaining academic achievement in an all-English classroom.

In both early and late transition programs, students receive instruction that develops their native language skills, instruction in ESL, and content area instruction in varying degrees in English or the
first language. Students are grouped according to first language, and teachers are bilingual (Hernandez-Chavez, 1984).

--Structured Immersion Programs (used either in elementary or secondary level schools). Immersion programs include, in varying degrees, development of the student’s first language skills and content area instruction in English. No structured ESL component is included. While students may address the teacher in either their first language or English, teachers (who are bilingual) respond generally in English. Content area instruction is based on the notion of "comprehensible input," in which the teacher uses only the vocabulary and structures that can be understood by students (Ramirez, 1986).

--Sheltered English or Content-Based Programs (used primarily to date with secondary school students). These "alternative" content classes allow LEP speakers from different backgrounds with some English proficiency to be grouped into specific content classes especially designed to provide them with "comprehensible input" (see previous section). A trained ESL teacher who is not necessarily bilingual provides instruction. Sheltered English or content-based programs may parallel virtually all mainstream academic curricular offerings or may consist of only one or two subjects (Chamot and Stewner-Manzanares, 1985).

--High Intensity Language Training (HILT) Programs (used primarily at the secondary level). In a HILT design, LEP students of various language backgrounds are grouped for a significant portion of the school day. Students receive intensive training in ESL, usually for three hours a day in the first year of instruction, less in succeeding years (Chamot and Stewner-Manzanares, 1985). Placement of students into regular classrooms is accomplished on a subject-by-subject basis and usually includes initial mainstreaming into linguistically undemanding classes such as music, physical education, and art. Some HILT models may incorporate content-based or sheltered English classes as an additional feature of program design. Teachers are trained in ESL and are not necessarily bilingual.

Source: http://www.ericdigests.org/pre-927/types.ht
Representing ESL Students in the School Community (How to be an advocate)

by Sandra Prager

ESL teachers regularly face situations in which students are not dealt with appropriately, whether intentionally or inadvertently. For example, how many ESL teachers have faced a situation in which testing accommodations were viewed as inconveniences, budget requests were deemed "extraneous," or even subtle attitudes were negative such as viewing students who don’t speak English as being "dumb"? The onslaught of negative attitudes can produce frustration, resentment, and even accusations, eventually leading to a negative cycle of recrimination between the teacher and the administration.

Such a situation is certainly not conducive to a positive educational atmosphere. Neither students nor teachers can flourish in such an environment. The question is, what can a teacher do to change the situation? What can he or she do to change attitudes and practices that may be well ingrained in the school culture? And finally, what can a teacher do to ensure that his or her own level of knowledge and sensitivity to the cultures and experiences of the students does not lead into this cycle of conflict and alienation, thus destroying professional efficacy.

Various Response Strategies

There are a variety of strategies teachers commonly use when faced with such a situation. Some teachers withdraw and "take it," feeling progressively more abused until emotional distress leads to a change in environment, wherein he or she is more sensitive to offense and likely to repeat the cycle again, only this time more quickly from the 'lessons learned.' Some teachers are explosive and confrontational in approaching administration, acting under the concept that "I'm right, therefore I’m justified." Almost always, these two reactions are destructive and do not achieve the goal of making significant, foundational changes within the prevailing culture of the organization in order to represent better the needs of the students, and to ensure their academic, personal, and social success.

The first thing an ESL teacher must do in facing such a situation is the same thing he or she is asking others to do: enlarge your perspective. The fact is that most ESL teachers are the resident experts within their schools about their students, their backgrounds and their needs. However, when others are not aware of issues pertaining to ESL or international students, it's easy to assume that "they know as much as I do, so they must just not care about my kids." This is a common error, which breaks down positive interaction between the teacher and others. There are times when actual prejudice or callousness is involved in poor decision making. However, even this can be overcome by a dedicated professional who is willing to follow some simple principles.

Principles of Successful Representation

Principle #1: Educate, educate, educate! Ignorance is the root of negativity, and many people are not aware of the many academic, personal, and cultural issues of our students. You will be the most important person in building an educated community.

Principle #2: Work from the top down, if possible. The closer to the top you can muster support, the fewer people you have to influence. If the top isn’t receptive, you can still work at lower
levels to develop support, but then more people have to be involved in order for their combined influence to be able to effect change.

**Principle #3**: Put yourself in 'their shoes' when making proposals or presentations, taking into consideration how the program will affect the person to whom you're presenting. For example, the principal is interested in student outcomes, test scores, grades, parent involvement, etc. A direct tie-in to these issues should be established as you make any kind of a proposal, even if you're promoting something to the teacher next door. Despite his or her altruism toward students, you should still include how this will make his or her life easier—or cover the "what's in it for me" base.

**Principle #4**: Participate in decision-making mechanisms such as school based management or school improvement teams, department meetings, etc. This is a way to make connections and have a forum for sharing your concerns. It also allows you to provide input before final decisions are made, possibly influencing decisions from the outset. Additionally, co-members who are exposed to these issues begin to gain a heightened awareness of ESL students’ issues, eventually becoming able to represent the needs of the ESL students independently. Accessing decision-making bodies is the easiest way to build an educated community from the top down.

**Principle #5**: Make connections with key program representatives such as the testing coordinator, scheduler, administrator, etc. These people make independent decisions in their arenas of responsibility, all of which have an impact on ESL students. Timely input can affect decisions. Additionally, influencing the opinions and perspectives of these key persons can produce more support and representation for your program from different angles. As you begin to build support within the key advisory groups and representatives of the school, that influence will translate into support for students and their needs.

**Principle #6**: Establish positive professional relationships. One of the biggest mistakes ESL teachers can make, even with the best intentions, is to assume a negative, critical, confrontational stance with others. Teachers need to take the attitude of giving others the benefit of the doubt, as it were, that behaviors or decisions were made on the basis of lack of understanding as opposed to lack of willingness to support the students. With that attitude in mind, it becomes much easier for the ESL teacher to approach others to make them aware of his or her concerns. Perhaps the number one rule of thumb in representing the population is not to assume a confrontational stance with others, especially administrators or key decision makers. The goal of the school is to create an environment that is conducive to the learning of all students. It is impossible to create community through confrontation. Despite one’s frustration, despite the unfairness of the situation, more progress will be made if the teacher can assume a collaborative stance from which to attempt to reach consensus with others as to how all students’ needs can be represented. This means that from time to time, the teacher will have to postpone a discussion about a situation until he or she can approach it from a positive stance, one that respects the position and the person with whom there is a problem. If we are working toward the goal of attaining respect for our population of students, we must first demonstrate that same respect toward others. Neither the ESL teacher, nor any other teacher, should vent their frustrations on others. That’s not to say that we don’t all need support and an ear to hear us from time to time. However, that becomes the realm of personal support as opposed to the professional relationships that we are trying to establish.

As a vice principal, I regularly make decisions that affect the ESL student population. I find that despite my background as an ESL teacher, there are many times when I simply can't see
the issues with the same clarity as the teacher who is "in the trenches." At times I have been treated with derision, as though I were "the enemy." However, I know that from my perspective, I genuinely need the assistance of the ESL teachers to help me be aware of and representative of the ESL population. I don't want them to feel offended that I need their input. If I were not responsive, I could justify their discontent; however, the fact that they have to speak up in order for subtle issues to be attended to is not, in my opinion, a bad thing. I don't believe that we should work for the goal of not needing the input of the ESL teacher.

Don't wait until you need something from someone to begin to establish the groundwork for mutual collaboration on problems. It is almost certain that problems will arise eventually, so establishing positive professional relationships from the outset is good practice in preparation for all kinds of situations. By the time a difficulty arises, it may be very difficult to engage the support of others if there has been no groundwork established of professional respect. This is simply positive professional behavior. Despite our frustrations with inequities, which do indeed exist, we must maintain our professionalism at all times in order to maximize our influence on decision makers. The worst thing for students is for teachers to have relationships with decision makers that make them want to run in the other direction when they see the teacher coming.

**Principle #7:** Be patient. Teachers who become advocates for their students must be realistic in their expectations about how quickly attitudes will shift and changes take place. Change begins slowly and takes time. Typically, if an advocate senses a positive reception to the issues he or she is bringing forward, eventually he or she will see changes in the policies and practices of the decision makers. Those changes will not take place immediately. Usually, a period of time is required for the new information and perspective to be assimilated and transformed into practice. One should expect this delay time and realize that it is a part of the natural change process. Expecting immediate change is self-defeating because it accentuates a sense of failure and heightens frustrations in an already difficult situation. In the meantime, efforts to represent students and educate decision makers should continue, in the confidence that the changes will be forthcoming.

**Principle #8:** Be persistent. The 'slow and steady wins the race' adage applies here. More and better progress is made through persistent, gentle effort than a sudden push. People assimilate information slowly and after many repetitions. Gently bring your students' issues to the forefront continuously in a positive professional manner to attain maximum results. Even if only because people tired of hearing you, your efforts will begin to produce results.

**Principle #9:** Be proactive in representing your program. As situations arise in which you can celebrate students' successes or accomplishments, if presentations need to be made, if someone needs further information about students' personal or academic needs, be available and willing to step forth. Work to develop a sense within the community that these students are an integral and valuable part of the program. Don't just wait until someone does something you don't like. Work on promoting your students --everyone wants to be a part of success. If you share your students' successes, they are more likely to be well received by others.

If possible, provide ways in which teachers can become more aware of the needs of this population. For example, present mini-lessons in faculty meetings about cultural differences such as gestures, eye contact, proximity, etc. Provide cultural awareness or language training sessions during in-service days or as a class. Some counties have such programs in place. If the school will enroll enough teachers, the course can often be offered on-site, thus reinforcing community growth. Share your knowledge. Watch for opportunities to present your students in a positive light. It's not necessary to mandate an eight-week staff development program to "enlighten" your co-workers. Simply representing your students' perspectives as situations arise.
will begin to open others’ eyes that there is more to the situation than what they initially perceive.

**Principle #10:** Work on 'softening up' resistance. From time to time, teachers will encounter genuine resistance rather than what might be explained as an inadvertent oversight. This takes the form of refusal to take into consideration the information being provided by the ESL teacher (and/or others) about the needs of the ESL population. Rather than responding to explanations about why these needs must be taken into consideration, others may continue to demonstrate prejudicial attitudes and make pejorative decisions that have a negative impact on the students. When issues are brought up, there is overt refusal to take those issues under advisement. Even under the best of circumstances, decision makers will usually not respond to input by immediately embracing all of the suggestions made. However, it is reasonable to expect that consideration be given to the issues, that they be taken into account, and that if there is common ground that can be easily implemented, that efforts be made to do so. If consideration is not given to the issues and the person is intractable in their stance, that person must be 'softened up' to the issues at stake.

Applying a variety of the principles described here will work together to overcome resistance. By actively promoting students’ qualities and needs in a positive professional manner, with patience and persistence, in decision making groups from the top down, using the perspective of the stakeholder, and by continuing to educate, educate, educate, most resistance can be overcome. The more people you have influenced to understand the issues, the more people can help in exerting their influence for change. The option which some people jump to first, that 'going over the heads' of decision makers should be an absolute last resort. If no other option is available, or abuse is severe, then the person must be brought to account by an appeal to a higher authority. This option is effective but is also costly and should not be applied without considering the impact on the people involved, which is usually a negative backlash to the relationships between parties. At times this is a necessary sacrifice, but it should not be the standard operating procedure.

Individual teachers can make a tremendous difference in their school community on the attitudes and practices of others that affect their students. Ignorance and/or resistance to the concerns of a special population of students is commonplace, to say the least. However, this does not constrain us to defeat. We must realize that as representatives of an increasing population of English language learners, we are the torch-bearers for raising the level of awareness of the people around us. Indeed, true change is only accomplished in this way, with one individual leading the fight, not against others, but against ignorance and prejudice. My own experience is that by following these principles, not only can we better represent our students, but we begin to be perceived as essential sources of valuable input as to how to prevent problems from arising and how to deal with them when they do. Attaining this status is professionally beneficial in a variety of ways.

This is not a calling for the faint of heart. The easy response to these difficulties is to shut ourselves in our rooms and complain rather than exert the extra effort and influence necessary to overcome. However, if we are truly to help and represent out students, we must consider the nature and the value of the people we represent and the very special task we bear.

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Online resources for ESL Teachers

LPAC Guides:
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/student.assessment/resources/guides/lpac/index.html

TEA Bilingual/ESL Homepage
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/bilingual.html

List of TX Approved Tests for LEP Students
http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/leptests.html

ESL/ Bilingual Resource page sponsored by TEA
http://www.tcbee.org/

ESL pages:
www.colorincolorado.org
www.eslcafe.com
www.everythings esl.net
www.siopinstitute.net

Books for working with ELLs


