Unlocking English Learners’ Potential: Strategies and Leadership for ELs’ Success

Diane Staehr Fenner, Ph.D.
Summary

Presentation Overview

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- Framework for equitable and excellent EL education
- 3 instructional strategies:
  1. Supporting ELs’ oral language development
  2. Concise instruction of background knowledge for ELs
  3. Scaffolding ELs’ instruction
- Leveraging teachers’ leadership skills to serve ELs
About Me
Framework for Equitable and Excellent EL Education
Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: A Resource Guide for English Language Arts

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Colorín Colorado Blog: Helping ELLs Succeed

Welcome to our Colorín Colorado blog. This blog is focused on helping English language learners (ELLs) succeed in the classroom, with a special focus on strategies and tools that support the use of college- and career-ready standards (such as the Common Core) with ELLs. The blog includes updates from the ELI field about topics such as language proficiency standards and assessments, as well as practical tips for developing academic language, helping ELLs tackle grade-level content, and collaborating with colleagues.

For related content, see our Colorín Core and ELI resources section. You can also browse blog posts by topic.
Unlocking ELs’ Potential

1. Why you need this book to support ELs
2. Using a culturally responsive framework
3. Scaffolding instruction for ELs
4. Fostering ELs’ oral language development
5. Teaching academic language to ELs
6. Vocabulary instruction and ELs
7. Teaching ELs background knowledge
8. Scaffolded text-dependent questions
9. Formative assessment for ELs
Guiding Principles

1. ELs bring many strengths to the classroom.
2. ELs learn best when they are taught in a welcoming and supportive school climate.
3. ELs should be taught language and content simultaneously.
4. ELs benefit when their teachers collaborate to share their expertise.
5. ELs excel when their teachers leverage advocacy and leadership skills.
Strategy 1. Supporting ELs’ Oral Language Development
• Correlates with literacy development
• ELs build discipline-specific language and vocabulary
• Inclusion of ELs in academic discussions lacking
Four Practices for Fostering ELs’ Oral Language Development

1. Come to the discussion prepared
2. Use appropriate body language
3. Participate by taking turns
4. Make connections to what others have said
Come to the Discussion Prepared

• **Why**: ELs benefit from more preparation

• Strategies to prepare ELs for discussions:
  – Key vocabulary / word bank
  – Answer discussion questions in writing
  – Sentence stems
  – Practice with partner
### Come to the Discussion Prepared Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Follow-Up Steps</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Have I developed an oral-language activity that will allow students authentic opportunities to speak, provides students time to strengthen and deepen their responses, and includes engaging discussion prompts?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Have my ELs had sufficient exposure to the content and academic language needed to participate in the activity? (Practice 1)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Make Connections to What Others Have Said

• **Why**: ELs need to interact with the ideas of others

• Strategies to support ELs to make connections:
  – Modeling
  – Provide sentence stems and frames on index cards
  – Conduct conversation “mini-lessons”
## Sentence Stems and Frames

**FIGURE 4.9** Talk Moves Sentence Stems and Frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Talk Move</th>
<th>Sentence Stem/Frame</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Restating                 | • So you are saying . . .  
                           | • What I understood you to say is . .  |
| Agreeing                  | • I agree with (Yuri) because . .  
                           | • (Emma’s) point about . . was important because . .  |
| Disagreeing               | • I disagree because . .  
                           | • I see it differently because . .  |
| Asking a clarifying question | • Could you give an example of . .  ?  
                           | • I’m confused when you say . .  |
| Adding to an idea         | • I’d like to add to (Rosa’s) point. I think that . .  
                           | • I agree with (Woo Jin) and furthermore I think that . .  |
| Making connections between ideas | • When (Albert) said . . , it reminded me of . .  
                           | • I see a connection between what (Laura) said and what (Karolina) said. The connection is . .  |
Strategy 2. Concise Instruction of Background Knowledge
A cricketer whose bowling average is 12.4 runs per wicket takes 5 wickets for 26 runs and thereby decreases his average by 0.4. How many wickets were taken by him until the last match?
Framework For Building ELs’ Background Knowledge

1. **Assess**: Determine the amount of background knowledge ELs have on a topic or text

2. **Select**: Decide which background knowledge is essential to provide ELs access to the topic or text

3. **Activate**: Activate prior background knowledge ELs already possess

4. **Teach**: Concisely teach ELs new background knowledge
Step 1: Assess

- Oral discussions
- Anticipation guides
- Checklists
- Self-ratings
- Cloze assessments
- Word sorts
- Opinionnaires
- Caption writing

Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012; Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017
Step 2: Select

Do non-ELLs have background knowledge on the topic?

Yes →

Does the background knowledge provide information in place of what the author is going to provide in the text?

Yes →

Is the background knowledge about big issues that will help students make sense of the text?

Yes →

Is the background knowledge concise?

Yes → Teach this background knowledge.

No → Do not teach this background knowledge.

No →

No →

Do not teach this background knowledge.
Step 3: Activate

- Title discussion
- Writing picture captions
- Carousel brainstorming
- Sentence starters
- Categorized sticky notes
Step 4: Teach

- Short, teacher-developed text with guiding and supplementary questions
- Web link
- Brief video clips
- Text-based instruction
- Home language support (e.g., text, Web link, video)

Edwards, R. (2016). ¿Quién fue Paul Revere?
Strategy 3. Scaffolding for ELs
Importance of Scaffolding

- Not another word for “help”
- Critical for ELs’ success
- Goal for ELs
3 Categories of Scaffolds

1. Materials and resources
2. Instruction
3. Student grouping
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ELP Level</th>
<th>Scaffolds for Instruction by Level</th>
<th>Scaffolds for All Levels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Beginning</strong></td>
<td>• Access to text, video, and/or instructions in home language, as well as in English</td>
<td>• Concise background knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sentence frames to help ELs respond to text-dependent questions posed throughout the lesson</td>
<td>• Pretaught vocabulary</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Word walls and word banks</td>
<td>• Graphic organizers</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Reduced linguistic load for language of instruction</td>
<td>• Glossaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intermediate</strong></td>
<td>• Access to text, video, and/or instructions in home language, as well as in English, as appropriate</td>
<td>• Dictionaries</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Sentence stems</td>
<td>• Repetition, paraphrasing, and modeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Word walls and banks</td>
<td>• Pair and small-group work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Advanced</strong></td>
<td>• See scaffolding for all levels</td>
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</tbody>
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Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017; adapted from August, Staehr Fenner, & Snyder, 2014
# Scaffolded Lesson Planning Checklist

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Checklist Statement</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I know the strengths and needs of each EL in relation to the language demands of the lesson. I have set individual goals to help my ELs progress in their acquisition of English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. I have analyzed the language demands of the lesson and identified areas that may be challenging for my ELs.</td>
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<td>3. I have developed a list of key vocabulary to preteach and determined how I will teach and provide opportunities to practice this vocabulary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>4. I have determined specific aspects of language use that I will focus on during my lesson.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5. I have determined what background knowledge to teach (if any) and how to teach it in a concise manner.</td>
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<tr>
<td>6. I have determined how to effectively group students in order to most effectively support their learning of content and acquisition of English.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. I have included opportunities for students to practice key concepts in varied ways using multiple modalities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. I have selected home language resources (as appropriate) that can support ELs in learning the new content and academic vocabulary.</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. I have selected or developed scaffolded materials to support ELs of varying proficiency levels (e.g., graphic organizers, sentence stems and/or sentence frames, and visuals).</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. I have determined how I will assess student learning and how I will scaffold the assessment for ELs of varying proficiency levels.</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Discuss

• Select one strategy
  – Oral language
  – Background knowledge
  – Scaffolding

• Discuss how you might use it, adapt it, or describe it to a colleague
Leveraging Teachers’ Leadership Skills
Leadership Definition

• Think of a leader
• Definition: “The process of influencing ...the behavior of others in order to reach a shared goal”

Northouse, 2007; Stogdill, 1950 as cited in Darioly & Schmid Mast, 2014, p. 74
EL Leadership Components

- EL Leadership
  - EL Leadership Interpersonal Skills
  - EL Leadership Actions
EL Leadership Interpersonal Skills

- Character
- Political skills
- Nonverbal communication
- Conflict resolution
- Relational skills
EL Leadership Actions

• Taking initiative
• Proactively serving as a resource
• Communicating effectively
• Continuing your own professional development and learning
1. Choose one strategy:
   - Supporting ELs’ oral language development
   - Concise instruction of background knowledge for ELs
   - Scaffolding ELs’ instruction

2. Discuss how you can draw from your leadership skills and take action to ensure this strategy is used throughout your ELs’ day
   - Leadership skill(s)
   - Leadership action(s)
Reflection & Next Steps

- What is one take away from today’s session?
- What will your next move be?

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Thank You!

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