

Bilingual Students in the Elementary Classroom

*A Reference for the Practicum Student
at Boston College Lynch School of Education*



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Introduction

At Boston College, we at the Lynch School of Education have a common mission to work towards a more just world and enhance the human condition

Our mission at B.C. is to enhance the human condition through education and educational practices and to make the world more just.

through education and educational practice. As part of this mission, we want to prepare you to effectively teach all types of learners. This manual is designed to help you to best teach elementary students who are English Language Learners (ELLs).

This manual can assist you in many ways. You may have some questions as to how to best teach these students, who come to the classroom with an array of skills and abilities, or you may just need general suggestions and advice for working with this population. This resource has been designed to give you practical ideas for working with English language learners in addition to other students in your class, so that all students may have the optimum benefit of learning under your tutelage. We at Boston College's Lynch School of Education want to prepare you for this challenge so that you feel it is one that you can meet, and meet well.

This manual is designed to be a resource for you, and is not necessarily to be read from cover to cover. Before you delve in, take a minute and think about what kind of information might be of assistance to you. Here is an overview of what you will find:

- *In the Classroom With Your Cooperating Teacher: What Can You Do?* In this first section, you will find tips about how your role as an extra teacher in the classroom can particularly benefit English language learners. This section is primarily designed for pre-practicum students—the remainder of the manual helps all practicum students know more about specific ways of teaching to better meet the needs of linguistically diverse students.
- *English Language Learners—What to Expect:* In this section, you will find information about the different kinds of ELLs and get a better idea of what you might encounter and how that might affect what you will teach.
- *Tips for Teaching So That ALL Students Learn:* In this section, you will find information on general teaching tips for the bilingual learner in the classroom (these tips also make instruction better for all students).

- *The Elementary ELL Learner – Promoting Literacy*: This section provides teaching activities for the four areas of literacy: speaking, reading, writing and listening.
- *Tips for Content Area Instruction*: In this section, you will find teaching suggestions specific to social studies, science and math. For teachers who are specialists in other areas, elements from all of these sections will be of assistance.
- *SIOP Lesson Protocol, Glossary, and References*: These sections provide a protocol to evaluate your and other teachers' ability to adapt to the needs of second language learners, a glossary, and a list of resources for further reading.

As you are reading this manual, keep in mind that teaching to meet the needs of bilingual learners also allows you to better meet the needs of other learners in your classroom. By reaching out to those students who may be struggling the most due to language differences, you will be teaching all students better. Instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners is simply good teaching.

Teaching to meet the needs of bilingual learners also allows you to meet the needs of other learners in your classroom better.

Using this manual and the other resources available to you through Boston College and the Office of Professional Practicum Experiences, we hope that you will feel adequately prepared to address the needs of linguistically different learners to the best of your ability during your practicum experiences. We welcome any feedback about how we can meet your needs in different ways.

In the Classroom With Your Cooperating Teacher: What Can You Do?

Many practicum students, especially during their first practicum experience, are a bit baffled regarding their role as another adult in the classroom. As a practicum student, your job is to be an active participant (and not a passive observer) in the classroom setting. No matter what, you are actively engaged in classroom activities at all times.

As a practicum student, your job is to be active participants (and not passive observers) in the classroom setting.

What does your role as an active teacher in the classroom have to do with English language learners? Since your cooperating teacher is the one who is responsible for directing the class as a whole, you have the opportunity to work with these students in a more personal way. In this section, you will discover how to accomplish this: how to identify who could most benefit from your assistance, what to do while you are assisting the student(s), and how to ascertain that each student is better capable by the end of your experience of independently seeking out the assistance that he or she needs.

The first day

Your first day at your new school provides you with an excellent opportunity to set up how you want the rest of the semester to be. You can practice being an active participant in the classroom and begin discovering who can most benefit from your assistance. In order to adequately assist English language learners (ELLs), the most important thing that you have to do first is find out who they are. This is actually trickier than you may think!

The cooperating teacher in the classroom is the first place to begin. Has the teacher given out student surveys to parents to discover who might have differing language needs and/or unique language backgrounds? (See

Finding the ELLs:

- ***ask your teacher***
- ***ask the ESL/ELL specialist***
- ***ask the students***
- ***interact with/observe students***

Appendix A for a useful survey). Checking in with the ELL or English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher will also let you know who is receiving special services in the school. In talking to your teacher and the ESL specialist about these issues you will not only gain insight about the makeup of your classes, but you will see the cooperative nature of schools as communities, and reinforce the “Community of Learners” model.

But what about students who have not been identified, or when there are many ESL/ELL teachers, and it is difficult to pin down which students are being served? If it is the beginning of the school year or new students have entered the classroom, it is possible that your cooperating teacher has indeed not had the chance to find out who is a second language learner. How can you do this on your own? Besides directly asking the students if they speak a language other than English, the best way of determining who can most benefit from your assistance is by getting to know your students. You want to focus your efforts where they are needed.

The best way to determine who needs your assistance is to interact with and observe the students.

What to look for...

- Students who don't seem to be following along
- Students who speak another language among themselves
- Students who constantly look at what others are doing and then do the same
- Students who get up to do something else, such as sharpen a pencil or get a drink of water, after directions are given before beginning the task – this is often a sign that the student did not understand the directions and is waiting to see what the other students do

Working with students while the teacher is instructing the whole class

Once you have identified some students with language needs who can benefit from extra in-class attention, you can start making your presence known to those students. Before and after class, get to know the students a little bit.

While the teacher is teaching, sit near enough to a student so that you can lean over and speak to the student quietly when necessary, without disrupting the class. As the teacher is instructing, monitor the student to see if the student is paying attention. If the student is paying attention, monitor to see if the student appears to be following along with what the teacher is saying. However, be discreet and be certain that the student is comfortable with your presence. When the teacher gives directions for a task to be completed, does this student understand what he or she is supposed to do? Communicate with the student in an unobtrusive way if you feel that it will help the student to follow along with the teacher better.

Sit close enough to the student so that you can easily provide assistance, but be certain your presence is welcome.

As the semester progresses, you should be communicating regularly with your cooperating teacher about your work with the student and the students' performance, and ascertaining that the teacher finds this assistance to be in everyone's best interest. If the student is an older elementary student, you should also be checking in with him or her regularly to see if your assistance is helpful, and finding out if there is anything that you could be doing differently that might be more effective.

Working with students during small group and independent work

You should be ready with some specific strategies to work with your student when the teacher gives time for independent or group work.

When the teacher gives the students opportunities to read or work independently or in small groups, you can take advantage of the opportunity to work individually with the students, ask them questions about how to better assist them, and make use of the resources available to you in this manual. You should have already looked through the manual and be ready with a few strategies—specifically, look at the sections on developing literacy, teaching tips, and content area teaching and activities. This is a great opportunity to use some of the activities or suggestions provided.

Your classroom experiences will vary, but try to do as much as you can to figure out how to best meet the needs of second language learners of English.

Wrapping up the semester

As your practicum experience comes to a close, reflect on what you have done over the course of the semester to help the ELLs in the classroom succeed. For example, some useful questions might be:

- Do you feel you have learned how to better identify ELLs in the classroom?
- Do the students better understand directions given in class?
- Do you have a sense of which strategies succeeded for these students and why?
- Are you beginning to get a sense of how to adapt content and lessons for second language learners?
- Are these students better able to function in the class?

Ten weeks is too short of a time to make an appreciable difference in a student's overall school performance; but, if you have been active with the student and use the student's and teacher's feedback about your assistance, then the student will undoubtedly have more skills than he or she had at the beginning of the semester. Most importantly, you should reflect on your

experience and your awareness of the needs of English language learners in the classroom. Being aware of what you have learned from this experience will help you better be able to apply it to your future practicum and teaching experiences. Just as important, reflecting on the questions you still have helps direct your own learning needs as you begin your life-long professional development.

Most importantly, you should reflect on your experience and your awareness of the needs of English language learners in the classroom.

The English Language Learner

The amount of diversity, both linguistic and cultural, which exists among English language learners (ELLs) is as diverse as the students themselves. Often, teachers or other students feel that students who cannot speak English have a deficiency of some sort. *This “deficit view” of linguistically diverse learners is unfair, untrue, and detrimental to their learning.*

Be careful of having a “deficit view” of English language learners.

Each student, whether an English language learner or not, comes to the educational setting with a unique array of background experiences and knowledge gained from those experiences. Gaining an understanding of some of the possible kinds of experiences ELLs may have encountered will provide you with some additional insight about how to teach them better.

An historic viewpoint

Historically speaking, English language learners have been underserved by public education. In a congressionally mandated study, students who were labeled as limited English proficient (LEP) received lower grades, were judged to have lower academic abilities, scored below their classmates on standardized tests of reading and math, had higher dropout rates, and were placed more frequently in lower ability groups (Moss & Puma, 1995).

English language learners are also sometimes identified as having learning disabilities due to their limited ability to use English and are placed in special education programs before they have had the opportunity to fully acquire academic English and demonstrate their abilities. Once placed in a special education program, it takes an average of six years for a student who has been mislabeled to be correctly placed in a mainstream classroom, at which point they are often too far behind their classmates to get caught up in their content areas (Stefanakis, 2002). On the other hand, ELLs who do have special learning needs may not receive appropriate referrals for additional services since teachers may think that their lack of English fluency is the sole cause of their learning difficulties.

Remember that at Boston College, we teach for social justice and seek to improve the human condition through education and educational practices. This means that we must make an extra effort to find out who our students are and adapt to their needs. This also means treating all students with respect. Avoid labeling student language as “bad English” or “broken English”. Remember, English is used to communicate differently in different ethnic groups

and cultures. Today's teachers need to help students learn standard English and to know when, where and why its use is required or advantageous.

Diversity in educational experiences: English language learners

English language learners in a mainstream classroom may have immigrated from a far away place. Or, their parents may have immigrated, but the students themselves may be U.S. citizens. Either way, the students may not have been exposed to English before arriving at school.

English language learners have had a diverse array of educational and background experiences.

If these students have been learning English, they will come into the classroom with a variety of skills. Some may have learned English while also learning in their native language. Others may have begun to learn English at a time when their skills in their native language had not been fully developed. Regardless of the level of English proficiency, all English Language Learners in the classroom will be in need of linguistic support.

In some elementary schools, there are students who have immigrated without their parents and are living with relatives or friends. Others may be refugees who came from developing and/or war-torn countries where education was not available to any students, or to students of a particular gender, religion, or race. These students may be dealing not only with a lack of education, but they can also be dealing with traumatic experiences in their home countries which mainstream students and their teachers may have a difficult time imagining.

English language ability depends on many factors.

English language ability among students depends on many factors:

- Age of the student upon arrival to the United States (if the student has immigrated)
- Amount of English exposure that the student has had
- Literacy level of student in their native language
- How close their native language is structurally to English – students whose language is closer to English (such as French or Spanish) will generally be able to acquire English grammatical structures more quickly
- Literacy practices in the home in each language
- Attitudes of the students toward learning English

Students benefit greatly from language practice and awareness in any language, and these skills easily transfer into the acquisition of English. Other experiences, such as having older siblings or other older people who have learned English, will affect the student's acquisition of English.

Students may also have come from an environment or country where English was spoken, but of a non-standard variety. There are varieties of English around the world in such places as India and Hong Kong, as well as varieties within American culture which may differ from the way you as a teacher speak and were taught English. It is of the utmost importance that respect is given to these students with regards to both their culture and language, and that their language use not be seen as a detriment, but rather as a cultural asset and richness. It is our job as teachers not to “correct” the students' use of language, but rather to teach alternative forms and present them as such. Remember that bilingualism in any form makes a student a better learner.

Language development: What does it mean to know English?

In the classroom, you may hear one of your ELL students talking excitedly to another student in English. You may hear the rate of speech and quality of pronunciation and deduce that this student has been mislabeled—perhaps he didn't know English previously, but it is clear that now he is getting around without any problem, perhaps even using slang. You may think that it is no longer necessary to ensure that you are adapting your lessons to second language learners if you hear them speak and feel that they are fluent. Many people mistakenly make the assumption that all types of language use require the same degree of proficiency; either someone speaks English, or she doesn't. As you may have guessed, however, this is not always the case.

Think about some of the texts that you are currently reading for your college level classes. Consider how much you have to focus on the use of the author's language in order to understand the content being presented. Now, compare that to the amount of focus required for reading a novel, a

Academic English is used in formal contexts for academics and is connected with literacy and academic achievement. It includes technical and academic terms.

newspaper, or a letter from a friend. Language that is used in the academic setting is more complex than language used for everyday communication. It generally involves longer sentences and thus more complex linguistic structures. It is also introducing new ideas which are challenging to comprehend (Jameson, 1998). This

different level of language use in academic settings is known as “academic English,” and it takes significantly longer for a student to acquire than conversational English.

Examples of tasks that require the use of academic English would be:

- writing persuasively
- mapping stories (using story elements)
- answering reading-comprehension questions
- following directions
- reading and summarizing information from non-fiction texts
- articulating thinking skills in English
- solving word problems in math

Students might also not be familiar with the ways in which American students perform academic tasks, such as generating outlines, negotiating roles in cooperative learning groups, and interpreting charts and maps (Echevarria et. al., 2000).

Conversational versus Academic Language

As a teacher of ELL students in your classroom, it is essential that you be aware of the distinction between conversational and academic language. The acronyms BICS (which stands for Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) and CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency) were first introduced by Cummins (1979) to describe the types of language skills second language learners need to acquire. He introduced these terms to draw attention to the very different time periods typically required by ELLs to acquire conversational fluency as compared to grade-appropriate academic proficiency in a second language.

It can take 2-5 years for a student to be conversationally proficient, but 5-10 years for a student to be academically proficient in a second language (Jameson, 1998).

It takes between 2-5 years for a student to be proficient in conversational skills, but it can take between 5-10 years for a student to be proficient in academic language (Jameson, 1998). This is due to the fact that academic linguistic structures are harder to master and are only available in the academic setting. It is also challenging for students to reach grade-level academic proficiency because native English speakers are also always in the process of developing academic language, and thus are a moving target for non-native speakers; non-native speakers are in a constant state of catching up (Jameson, 1998).

More recently, Cummins (2003) has extended the definition of BICS and CALP into three categories:

Language Skill/Definition	Description
<p>Conversational Fluency:</p> <p>The ability to carry on a conversation in familiar face-to-face situations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Generally developed by native speakers by age five • Involves use of high frequency words and simple grammatical constructions • Generally develops within two years of exposure to second language
<p>Discrete Language Skills:</p> <p>Specific phonological, literacy and grammatical knowledge acquired as a result of direct instruction and engagement with language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some acquired early in schooling (e.g. knowledge of the letters of the alphabet) • Others acquired throughout schooling (e.g. conventions about spelling) • Can be learned by ELLs at a relatively early stage in their acquisition of English
<p>Academic Language Proficiency:</p> <p>The ability to understand and produce increasingly complex oral and written language</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Second language learners usually require <i>at least 5 years</i> of exposure to academic English to catch up to native-speaker norms • Reading comprehension ability in the content areas requires instruction that differs significantly from instruction in discrete skills

What does this mean for you as a teacher?

Adapt for students by:

- **paraphrasing**
- **modeling**
- **using only a few new vocab words at a time**
- **adapting assessments**

It is essential that when you are assigning tasks that involve the use of higher-level thinking skills, which might require advanced terminology and linguistic structures for older elementary students, that you clarify the terminology and linguistic structures.

For example, if, in a science class you are asking students to analyze data, you must first ascertain that students know what “analyze” and “data” are. You can do this by paraphrasing and modeling, among other things.

Introducing key vocabulary terms a few at a time will help ELLs understand their tasks more completely in the long run. It is also helpful to point out possible cognates or translate if English is impeding learning, especially for new concepts and technical terms. You must also be aware that written responses are often the most challenging for ELLs to produce (Echevarria, et. al, 2000).

**“Just because they can’t speak English proficiently, doesn’t mean they can’t think!”
(Echevarria, et al., p 90)**

When evaluating student responses, keep in mind whether you are evaluating them for their language skills, or for their acquisition of the required concepts, based on the objectives for the lesson. It may be more appropriate for you to develop and/or use an alternative assessment for these students.

Stages of language proficiency

What you do with English language learners in your classroom will depend a lot on the level of their English proficiency. In general, as you would imagine, students who are farther along in English have fewer linguistic issues. However, keep in mind that they still may be lacking academic language and/or complex grammatical structure.

Four stages of language proficiency:

- **early emergent**
- **emergent**
- **proficient**
- **advanced proficient**

One way of rating students' language proficiency is to classify them in one of four stages:

Stages of Language Proficiency		
Stage	Characteristics	Examples
Early Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student's knowledge of English extremely limited • Student conveys a few simple words or phrases • Also known as the "silent period" 	Student may ask for a drink of water by just saying: "Water?"
Emergent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student able to put words together into simple phrases • Syntax of utterances (the form of the sentence) is generally non-standard 	Student may ask for a drink of water by saying: "Water can I drink?"
Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student able to use English in everyday speech and writing for communication purposes • Syntax more regulated • Conversational and oral language easier than more academic language 	Student can ask for a drink of water in standard form and communicate orally, but has difficulty with expressing more abstract ideas.
Advanced Proficient	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student has mastered both conversational and academic English • Student has both vocabulary and syntax which are very close to that of a native speaker's 	Student can use both oral and written language fluently (as appropriate to grade level)

Cultural capital: What does it mean to know a culture?

All students, regardless of background, come to the educational setting with a variety of cultural influences: family culture, neighborhood culture, and the cultures which may be associated with their race, religion, or ethnic background, to name a few. All of these cultures are rich in traditions, beliefs, and values, and all of them are different. This concept, known by some theorists as *cultural capital*, means that all students have assets to bring to the learning environment. It also means that they do not necessarily have what Delpit (1998) refers to as “the accoutrements of the culture of power.” In other words, they may not possess the ability to control the spoken, written, and behavioral codes of the dominant society (Gibbons, 2002). Seeing these differences as an asset to your classroom from which you can draw as a teacher will make all students feel valued and demonstrate to them the need for respect and appreciation in the presence of differences, even differences that aren't as easily understood.

cultural capital—the cultural assets that the students bring to the learning environment

When people think of culture, they often think more of the *surface structure* of a culture, or that which is most readily apparent. This is sometimes referred to as the “Three Fs”: food, fiestas, and famous people (Jameson, 1998). Another aspect of culture, one which is often not readily apparent, even to those within the culture itself, is called the *deep structure* of a culture. This refers to the shades of normalcy which are associated with behaviors, ways of using language and other forms of communication, and overall ways of life (Jameson, 1998). This can refer to more easily visible forms, such as personal space, business customs, and attitudes towards promptness, but can also manifest itself in the form of values and morals which are deeply ingrained. The deep structure of a culture also refers to practices which are seen as offensive by one culture but not another, such as touching someone on the head, and also represents everyday behaviors, such as the use of eye contact to convey respect (or a lack thereof), and the way that parents view the role of teachers.

surface structure of a culture vs. deep structure

How does knowing that all people and cultures are different affect teachers and their classrooms?

Not only do other cultures often live differently, but they also learn and are taught differently in schools.

One important aspect of culture which is often overlooked by educators is the fact that not only do other cultures often live differently, but

they also learn and are taught differently in schools. Students may not be accustomed to the American ways of being a student, such as doing group work or performing independent projects or experiments.

For these reasons, it is essential that teachers be flexible and explicit with regard to their students' role in the educational process, and the ways in which they are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of concepts. You may have to teach them how to work in groups or complete assignments the way that you expect. They also might not know how to communicate effectively that they do not understand your expectations. Teachers working with all students need to be willing to engage in "socially responsive teaching" using instruction that is sensitive to and builds on culturally different ways of learning, behaving, and using language (Echevarria, et al, 2000).

"Socially responsive teaching" means using instruction that is sensitive to and builds on culturally different ways of learning, behaving, and using language (Echevarria, et. al, 2000).

Understanding that our students' cultures may be different from our own, and beginning the process of examining and comparing them, will lead us and our students to a better understanding of the many threads in the fabric of our world.

Tips for Teaching So That ALL Students Learn

Every classroom has diverse learners, each of whom poses a unique challenge for a teacher in a classroom where every student has the right to be given the chance to succeed. Second language learners of English also pose unique challenges, as we saw in the last section. The tips included in this section are designed to meet the specific needs of those students, but you will find that they make learning more accessible for other kinds of learners as well. This section discusses “tips” in several areas:

- *Classroom environment*
- *Basic lesson structure*
 - *context-embedded instruction*
 - *scaffolding*
- *Teaching behaviors*

Classroom environment

The way that a student feels upon entering a classroom will largely affect the amount that he or she learns in that classroom. Good teachers are like good parents—firm but caring (Steinberg, 2002). A positive classroom environment is one that fosters an atmosphere of mutual respect, meaning that the teacher respects the students, the students respect the teacher, and the students respect one another. Some teachers reportedly dedicate the first two weeks solely to building a positive classroom environment. They state that students learn so much faster with a positive environment that the students are actually ahead of where they would be at the end of the year if they had started with content right away. In other words, feel free to take some time at the beginning of the year to get to know your students as people and make them comfortable in the learning environment. This could include teambuilding activities or icebreakers and should establish the kind of atmosphere you expect in the class for the rest of the year.

Take some time at the beginning of the year to get to know your students and make them comfortable in their environment.

A classroom environment needs to be more than just positive to meet the needs of ELLs. It also needs to be accepting of human limitations and be open to different cultures and ways of communicating and learning. *Differences of all types must be seen as assets rather than as deficits.*

A basic lesson structure

Context-embedded instruction

When introducing new concepts or vocabulary, students benefit from first using language in a context-embedded or meaning-rich environment. For example, asking students to use language in a science class might begin with an experiment which they are doing in groups, using oral language to communicate to one another and the teacher about what is happening. Language use in this environment is conversational in nature, and does not generally require complete sentences. The items in the experiment are available to help the students find words to describe them. As students become more comfortable with the speaking topic, they can begin to move away from talking about the here and now towards more abstract concepts, and be able to summarize what happened in the experiment without having the items from the experiment in front of them. As they move from more spoken-like contexts to more written-like contexts and are better able to use the terms and concepts, they are better able to communicate their ideas in a context-reduced environment (such as a written summary of the experiment) (Gibbons, 2002).

Use language in a meaning-enriched (context-embedded) environment.

Connecting new concepts and vocabulary to students' real life experiences and background experiences is also essential. Remember that it is essential that teachers become familiar with students' background knowledge, which may vary greatly depending on previous educational and life experiences. Students also benefit from the use of realia during demonstrations, or objects or pictures that allow students to really "see" the concept being presented.

Context-embedded instruction:

- **is concrete and/or hands-on**
- **uses pictures, other graphics, and/or realia**
- **makes connections to students' background knowledge and personal experiences**

Scaffolding leads from the concrete to the abstract

You may already have come across the term *scaffolding* in your education classes. Scaffolding learning involves supporting students with new concepts and content until they are ready to proceed on their own, much like in the construction sense of the word. In the classroom, teachers scaffold instruction when they

Scaffolding means making tasks manageable until the student grasps the concept enough to use it independently.

provide substantial support and assistance in the earliest stages of teaching a new concept or strategy, and then decrease the amount of support as the learners acquire experience through multiple practice opportunities (Echevarria, et. al., 2000).

How can scaffolding best be used with second language learners of English?

Scaffolding for these learners is two-fold: both *procedural* and *verbal* (Echevarria et al., 2000):

- *Procedural scaffolding*: using an instructional framework that includes explicit teaching, modeling, practice opportunities with other students, and expectations for independent work.
- *Verbal scaffolding*: being aware of ELLs' existing levels of language development and using prompting, questioning and elaboration to facilitate students' movement to higher levels of language proficiency, comprehension and thinking.

When scaffolding:

- **adjust your speech**
- **paraphrase regularly**
- **elaborate on student responses**
- **provide many practice opportunities and model expectations**

For example, a teacher is not providing sufficient scaffolding if she asks her students to make predictions from the title of an article on the rainforest, and then stops reading the article only once during the lesson to ask for another prediction. She is also not scaffolding if she only reads the article orally to the students. This does not allow for gradually reducing the support she is providing the students and encouraging them to become independent readers.

A better approach would be to begin reading the article orally, pausing frequently to paraphrase and elicit student responses (verbal scaffolding). The teacher could have then had the students read the rest of the article with a partner giving clear directions for the task and following up with one-on-one help with the students (procedural scaffolding) when necessary.

Examples of Scaffolding

Poor Scaffolding:

Teacher stands in front of the class, gives directions orally to read a story in the basal reader and answer the questions at the end of the story. Students work on their own as teacher sits and corrects other work.

Better Scaffolding:

Teacher gives directions orally and also has the directions written on the board. She tells the students that they will read the next story in the reader. She and the students look at the title to predict what will happen in the story. She reads the story aloud, pausing occasionally to paraphrase and check for understanding. At the end of the story, she has the students answer questions on a worksheet independently while circulating among the students to help with understanding.

Best Scaffolding:

Teacher introduces new story by activating students' background knowledge. During the discussion, teacher is paraphrasing and modeling "correct" speech. Teacher then introduces the story by looking at the title and asking students for their predictions. She writes ideas on the board, paraphrasing constantly and repeating ideas for clarity. She then begins to read the story aloud, pausing for explanation and further predictions. She continues to write ideas on the board as she reads. She then stops half-way into the story and explains the next set of directions, which she has written on the board. The students will read the rest of the story with a partner (which she has pre-assigned), and they will answer questions about the story together in writing (or orally). She models one response on the overhead to indicate her expectations. She then goes immediately to the ELL students to ensure they understand the directions. Students read the story, answer the questions, and share their answers as a class.

Teaching behaviors

The way in which the teacher interacts with the students in his or her class also has a large impact on the success of students, particularly ELLs. Using key teaching behaviors means that students will learn more content and have a better class experience. Key teaching behaviors mean that you:

- use appropriate speech
- model correct language
- increase your wait time
- give explicit directions
- repeat concept messages frequently
- use teacher-guided reporting/open-ended questioning
- check for understanding

Use appropriate speech

ELLs understand more of what is being said to them if speakers make an effort to make their speech more comprehensible. This includes always facing the class when speaking, slowing down the rate of speech so that all words are pronounced clearly, and regularly paraphrasing words that might be ambiguous or unfamiliar.

Simple paraphrasing consists of using the words “that is,” or, “in other words.” For example, a teacher focusing on appropriate speech would say, “Our task today is to predict the outcome of the story. In other words, our task is to make a good guess about the ending of the story”. You’ll notice that in this sentence, the teacher is clarifying academic language (predict) as well as terminology associated with the lesson (outcome).

Use appropriate speech:

- **face the class**
- **slow the rate of speech**
- **pronounce words clearly**
- **paraphrase**

Model correct language

Model correct language instead of correcting students’ language.

All ELL students will make errors in their language usage. Students benefit most when teachers monitor language for meaning rather than form, as is done by parents when their child first begins to speak (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1994). In other words, respond to students by commenting on what they said, not how they said it, while modeling correct grammar for them to hear.

Students benefit most when teachers model correct language, instead of having their language corrected. Error correction can make students feel uncomfortable about practicing language in front of others. Such correction also encourages them to focus on the form of their message rather than the meaning, thereby discouraging higher-order thinking skills (Gibbons, 2002). For example, if a student who is giving a presentation says, "And then the boy, he go to a house..," a teacher could respond with, "Yes, the boy goes to his house. And then what happens?" The teacher in this example is encouraging the focus on meaning, as well as encouraging the student to further elaborate on what he is trying to communicate.

Increase your wait time

You've probably discussed the notion of *wait time* in your education classes. The idea is that after teachers ask a question, students often need at least five seconds before they respond. During this time, students are formulating their answers and coming up with enough courage to say the answer in front of the class.

Give ELLs more time to think and respond.

ELLs, as you may have guessed, benefit from even more wait time. Not only are they having to formulate the correct answer in their mind, they are having to come up with the most accurate and grammatically appropriate way to say it, and this takes time (Echevarria et al., 2000).

Give explicit directions – orally and in writing/pictures

Giving directions in a way that can be understood by students is one of the most challenging tasks that new teachers face. Most new teachers are familiar with the experience of giving students directions for a task, and then receiving nothing more than blank stares from the students.

How can you give directions so that your expectations are clear to all students? When giving directions for a task to be accomplished, it is important that you have outlined in your mind the specific steps that the students will need to take in order to accomplish the task. This is best communicated to the class with a numbered list. For example, you might say, "First, you will get into your assigned groups. Second, you will determine who will play which roles. Third, you will read the story. Finally, you will use the paper on the table to write the three most important points from the story."

Before giving directions, outline in your mind the specific steps the students need to take to accomplish the task. Then, share these steps.

It is even more beneficial for the students to be able to see the directions as a list on the board or overhead projector while they are hearing them. The “visuals” provided can be in the form of writing for older students and in pictures for younger students, though pictures are beneficial for *all* ELL learners. When you have finished giving directions, ask someone in the class to tell you in his or her own words what they are supposed to do. This helps everyone hear the directions for the task a second (or third) time, as well as helps you to see where there might be some misunderstanding.

Repeat concept messages frequently

In the above section about giving directions, there were also examples of a message being repeated in different ways and by different people. When the

Make sure concept messages are repeated in various ways by:

- **yourself**
- **written text**
- **students**

teacher both said and wrote or had pictures of the directions, the message was repeated twice. Having a student repeat the directions repeated the message a third time. This kind of repetition is valuable in other aspects of teaching and communication as well.

Important concepts and vocabulary should be introduced several times and in a variety of ways during a lesson. Concept messages can be repeated by teachers, texts, and other students. (Gibbons, 2002)

Use teacher-guided reporting/open-ended questioning

Sometimes, an appropriate task for students is to report back to the class (and the teacher) about what they have learned.

ELLs often struggle with communicating ideas that they have just learned in a cohesive manner. Teacher-guided reporting allows the teacher to play the role of supporter for the student while the student is accomplishing this task. This means that the teacher occasionally asks the student to clarify a point when the student could better express him or herself with some encouragement. This also involves the teacher paraphrasing what the student has said after the student has been able to communicate the idea.

Support students during teacher-guided reporting and

- **ask for clarification**
- **paraphrase student responses**
- **let students try, even if they seem a little uncomfortable**
- **use open-ended questions**

It is vital that the teacher not jump in and complete the task for the student when the student is struggling. When the teacher has questions for the

student (or for the whole class during a class discussion), the student will be more involved and actively thinking if the questions are open-ended (in other words, require more than just a one-word answer) (Gibbons, 2002).

Check for understanding

It is important that all teachers regularly check to see if students are following along with new concepts and ideas by asking the class or individual students to directly communicate their level of understanding. Many student teachers leave this out because they assume all students are following along if their eyes are on the teacher. This can be disastrous if the students don't understand the material, especially if the content will be required for future tasks. Therefore, it is *essential* that all teachers frequently check for understanding so that they can reteach when necessary. This also allows for further concept repetition.

Examples of checks for understanding include:

Try these checks for understanding:

- **thumbs-up**
- **five-fingers**
- **traffic light**

- thumbs up/thumbs down (up if you understand, down if you don't, hand flat if you're in between)
- five finger check (hold up your hand—five fingers means you completely understand the information, one means you're not really sure what we're talking about today)
- a traffic-light check using colored slips of paper (green, yellow, red) or colored plastic cups which students can hold up at a specified time to demonstrate their level of understanding (green means you understand, yellow means you're unsure, and red means you don't. You have to explain this to ELLs, because some languages use the color "blue" to describe a "go" light).

The Elementary ELL Learner – Promoting Literacy

As an elementary teacher, you are in a unique position to aid students in their English language development. Younger students will generally be at an advantage in their acquisition over middle or high-school students in that their English-speaking peers will not be too far ahead of them in their literacy development. However, this does not mean that the students will not require active linguistic support, particularly as they move into the later elementary years. It is imperative that you be aware, as much as possible, of their literacy level in their native language, and of literacy practices in the home, whether in their native or in their second language.

The following sections will provide you with suggestions of activities for the four areas of literacy development: speaking, reading, writing and listening. These lists are by no means complete, but rather, are suggestions of lessons and techniques that can be particularly effective for language learners as well as for your native-English speaking students. The most important point to remember concerning your ELLs is to always incorporate both content and language objectives within your lessons.

Include both content and language objectives

All effective lessons have well-defined objectives. Ideally, the students are also aware of these objectives, and are also striving to reach them by the end of the lesson. Objectives should focus on both knowledge that should be acquired by the end of the lesson, as well as ways that that knowledge should be applied. This is known as the “know and be able to do” format, because objectives should identify both what students should know about a given topic, as well as what they will be able to do with it (preferably on the critical thinking end of the spectrum).

Include the terms know and be able to do in your objectives.

Focus on students’ language needs through the use of language objectives.

In a classroom with second language learners, it is critical that teachers have not only content objectives for their students, but also language objectives (Echevarria et al., 2000). This is beneficial if there are many ELLs in a class who are primarily performing at the same level. Language objectives can also be designed in conjunction with the ESL teacher as part of a co-teaching model. An example of a language objective could be: “Students will be able to identify verbs in the story that are in the irregular past tense”.

Use background knowledge

Connecting new information to previously learned concepts or experiences makes knowledge more accessible for the learner and allows the learner to see where new concepts fit in with prior knowledge. This can be done by questioning students about their past experiences and encouraging students to make connections between new material and old. Such an activity also helps the teacher to see what students have already learned. Students will not necessarily make connections between what they already know and what they are learning without teacher support (see “scaffolding” and “context-embedded”, pp. 19-20).

Take advantage of students' background knowledge to make connections between old knowledge and new knowledge.

Give students opportunities to speak, listen, read and write

Ideally, all lessons will provide students with the opportunity to practice all four areas of literacy in a safe and secure environment.

Speaking

The production of language encourages learners to process language more deeply than is required with listening (Gibbons, 2002). Speaking is much easier for students if they are in a classroom with a positive and nurturing environment, where students will not be criticized or corrected for imperfections in their English usage. It is best to progress from pairs to groups to whole-class speaking activities to give students practice using the terminology associated with the topic and to allow them to build confidence (Jameson, 1998). In a classroom where students have the opportunity to work in groups regularly and where speaking is necessary to accomplish a task, students are more likely to be comfortable with the oral aspects of the material. Such tasks should require, not simply encourage, speaking (Gibbons, 2002). Remember, it may take time for ELLs to be comfortable speaking in front of others, so be encouraging, yet patient.

Progress from pairs to groups to whole class speaking activities to build experience and confidence.

Activities to promote oral language development

* *Picture sequencing:*

For this activity, you will need a set of picture cards that tell a simple and predictable story or illustrate a predictable sequence. Give each student in the group one card. Tell the students not to show the others in their group their card.

Each student describes his/her card (it doesn't matter who starts), and when they have all finished, the group decides on the basis of the descriptions which card should come first, which second, and so on. This activity can lead to writing a story based on the pictures, or writing a description of the sequence of events.

* *Jigsaw (this activity can be used for any of the four areas of literacy):*

In this type of activity, students take an active role in their learning as they teach other students what they have learned. Step 1 is to divide the material to be learned into sections. Step 2, have students form "home" groups with as many students per group as sections of material. Step 3, ask each "home" group to send one member to an "expert" group where one section of the material will be read, discussed and learned by each member. Step 4, once the students have each learned the material, have them return to their "home" group and report to those students what they have learned. Step 5, after all students have taught the other members of their original group the material in which they are expert, have students do an activity individually in which they demonstrate that they have learned all the material.

* *Questionnaires:*

Students can ask their classmates, other students in the school, teachers, or community members to complete questionnaires about a range of topics. They can use the information as a basis for further class work.

* *I'm thinking of...:*

Use a set of pictures or objects related to a particular topic being studied, such as sets of dinosaur pictures, animals, food, or forms of transportation. One student in the group says "I'm thinking of something that is..." and then proceeds to describe the object. Whoever guesses the object then takes the next turn.

* *Describe and Draw:*

Children work in pairs, and each has a blank sheet of paper and drawing materials. Child A describes to Child B what she or he is drawing, and Child B reproduces the drawing according to A's description. This is a barrier game – they should not be able to see each other's work.

* *Guess Who?*

The board game "Guess Who" (Milton Bradley, available at AreYouGame.com) can be an excellent tool for students to learn adjectives, adjective placement, and descriptors for parts of the face. It is also a way for students to improve their questioning skills.

(For more information on these activities as well as other ideas, see Brisk & Harrington, 2000 and Gibbons, 2002)

Listening

Listening skills are often assumed to just “happen” in the process of the teaching of speaking. Listening, however, is a skill that needs to be actively taught to both native speakers and to second language learners alike. Listening is a key to language development: understanding what is said in a particular situation helps to provide important models for language use (Gibbons, 2002).

Listening is a skill that needs to be actively taught to students.

Listening to the teacher talk can provide excellent listening practice for students, as long as the teacher is making the input comprehensible by speaking slowly and clearly, paraphrasing often, and avoiding the use of pronouns when possible. Listening to other students talk (especially in paired activities) can also be beneficial because then the other student can respond directly to the listener's comprehension needs.

Activities for developing listening skills

** Sound Bingo:*

Make a selection of Bingo cards with the names of sounds on them, such as footsteps, someone laughing, a dog barking, a baby crying, the sound of rain, the sounds of traffic, glass breaking, etc. Alternatively, draw pictures to illustrate what makes the sounds. You will also need a “sound tape” of these sounds. As children hear a sound, they cover the word or picture on their card. The first person to have all the pictures covered is the winner.

** Sound Stories:*

Using a sound tape, play three different sounds to the children. In groups they make up a story in which all three sounds are significant. This activity can be connected to books on tape.

** Map Games:*

Give students identical maps, but with some road and building names removed. Map A should have the information that is not on Map B and vice versa. Collaboratively, but without showing each other their maps, the students must find out the missing names using questions like:

What's the name of the road opposite the post office?

What building is on the left of the post office?

** Split Dictation:*

Make two gapped versions of a text, with each text having different gaps. In pairs, students must complete the text by reading to each other the parts they have, and filling in the blanks for the parts they don't have, so that

collaboratively they complete the whole text. Students can take turns reading sentence by sentence. Children should not show each other their papers until the end.

** Picture Dictation:*

Students have a number of jumbled pictures that tell a story or give a recount. Read a text that tells the story in its correct sequence. As you read the text, students put the pictures in order.

** Jazz Chants:*

Carolyn Graham has created several books with tapes of chants that are wonderful for ELL students (also excellent for speaking as well as reading and writing extension activities).

(For these and other ideas, see Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Gibbons, 2002)

Reading

All elementary students will be at different stages of their reading development, regardless of their native languages. Never assume that just because a student cannot read in English, that the student cannot read at all. The student may be able to read very well in his or her native language. This ability will generally transfer to the student's ability to read in English. The time it will take for the student to read in English will vary, however, depending upon multiple factors such as: exposure to English, comfort in the classroom setting, and literacy support at home. Remember, though, that some students may have come from countries where they did not receive any formal schooling, and they may not be familiar with practices that many of us take for granted, such as even having books to read.

Activities that promote reading development

When reading a new text, students benefit from being taught to be reflective about what they're reading and from monitoring their own comprehension. Some examples of effective reading comprehension strategies for all learners are in the chart below. These will be applicable to students depending upon their reading level and grade level:

Reading Comprehension Strategies				
Strategy	When to use			Student asks...
	before	during	after	
Review material	✓			What kind of text is this? Who are the characters? What is the setting?
Predict	✓	✓		What will this be about? How will it end? Why do I think that?
Wonder/question	✓	✓		I wonder why the character did that? I wonder if this detail is important?
Answer questions		✓	✓	What are the answers to my questions? What new questions do I have, now that my other questions have been answered?
Determine importance		✓		Is this a relevant detail? Why might the author be telling me this?
Monitor comprehension		✓		Do I really know what is going on? Could I explain it to someone else? Should I reread or ask for assistance?
Summarize			✓	What was this text about? What are some implications that may not be directly addressed by the text?
Revisit predictions/evaluate learning			✓	Was I right in what I predicted? Why or why not? What have I learned by reading this text?

Source: Tovani, 2000 and Echevarria et al., 2000

For all of these reading comprehension strategies, it is beneficial if the teacher has an active role in the activity, encouraging students to think aloud,

keep reading journals, and be active readers. Eventually with guidance students will automatically complete these tasks on their own.

Emergent readers benefit from texts which have been adapted by simplifying sentence structure and including paraphrasing for vocabulary the student might not know (Echevarria et al., 2000). It is essential that reading tasks are at the appropriate comprehension level for the students.

Actively encourage all students to use reading comprehension strategies.

** Word cards:*

The Word Cards approach helps the students understand the sound-symbol connection of words. Words initiated by the students are used to learn decoding skills. Teacher prepares strong cardboard or index cards. Every day each student gives a word. As teacher writes the word on the card, he sounds out the word and lets the student watch as he writes. Give the cards to the students, and let them read them aloud and on their own (have Kindergarten students trace the letters with their fingers). Keep a file box in which to place the cards. Every day, have the students find their own words, sit with a classmate (or the teacher) and read their words to each other. Once students have between 10 and 30 words, use the cards for follow-up activities, such as spreading the cards on the floor, reading one word, and having the student locate it, or using them for spelling tests.

** Shared Reading:*

Choose stories with repetitive patterns, songs or poems (try "big books" with enlarged print for large groups). Model the reading process by reading the story (song) aloud while students listen. Use "think alouds" to model the comprehension strategies mentioned above. Read the story from the book or transparency, using a pointer to show where you are reading. Read with fluency and expression. Following the first complete reading, re-read the book inviting students to join in. Repeat this procedure as many times as is needed. Let individual students read to the class also using the pointer. Have small versions of the original available for students to borrow or take home. Use the reading to do different types of exercises such as looking for specific words, letters, rhymes, etc. Have students develop their own books using an original story as a pattern.

** Predicting from a Key Illustration:*

Photocopy a key illustration from the book and give children time in pairs or groups to say what they think the topic is about, or what the story will be.

* *Word Masking:*

Once a Big Book has been read several times, mask some of the words with small pieces of paper. Ask children to predict what the word is. Allow time to discuss alternative choices. For example, if the word is “replied” and someone guesses “said”, respond positively to this and use it as a basis for discussion. Among the words you mask, include not only “content” words, but also “functional” words such as pronouns and conjunctions.

* *Innovation on the Ending:*

Write a new ending to a story in groups, pairs or as a whole class.

* *Story Map:*

A story map is a visual representation of the main features of the story. It can be drawn after a story is read, or it can involve an ongoing process of adding details as the story is progressing.

* *Time Lines:*

Texts that incorporate the passage of time lend themselves to a time line. These include narratives and some information texts. Children can also illustrate key events on a time line.

* *Jumbled Sentences:*

For beginning readers, take a sentence from the text and write it on a sentence strip. Cut up the sentence into words. Children must reconstruct the sentence by putting the words into the right order. For very early readers, make this a simpler task by providing the model sentence on a separate strip.

(For more information on these activities as well other ideas, see Brisk & Harrington, 2000 and Gibbons, 2002.)

Writing

It is important that students be given the opportunity to practice writing regularly in many forms. Proper scaffolding with writing begins with the class exploring what they will be expected to write about, and then completing a writing task as a whole group (on the overhead, for example, while each student copies it down). It then progresses to group writing, pair writing, and, finally, independent writing. This process is known as: building the field, modeling the text type, joint construction, and independent writing (Gibbons, 2002). All of these activities rarely take place during one class period, and could take as much time as a few weeks. Remember that assessments that include writing sections should focus on whether or not the student is able to demonstrate acquisition of the concepts learned, rather than appropriate

language and grammar usage, unless the purpose of the assessment is to assess acquisition of language objectives as well as content objectives.

Activities for developing writing skills

** Mailbox Game:*

The Mailbox Game gives a real-life context for the children's natural desire to write each other notes in class. Letter writing provides an opportunity for the students to write for a genuine purpose to a specific audience. When used in a second language context, students are able to work at their individual levels of proficiency. Steps for the mailbox game:

Introduce students to the concept and format of letters; read books with letter-writing themes; explain to the students that they can write each other letters or notes when they have some free time. They should "mail" them in a large mailbox (created by you and/or the students). You should also write notes and letters; nominate one or two students as mail carriers; allow students to pick up their mail without disrupting other activities, for instance, after lunch or at snack time.

Scaffold for writing—let students:

- **explore the topic**
- **use pictures to represent their ideas**
- **write as a class**
- **write in pairs**
- **write independently**
- **write in their native language**

** Drawing as Prewriting:*

Drawing pictures before writing allows the students to get ideas down on paper quickly before they struggle with translating their ideas into written language. Have students select a general theme or have students choose their own themes. Prepare a book with blank pages and a cover that suggests the topic. Brainstorm to decide what will go in the book. The important aspect of this step is to get the students excited about wanting to draw and write about the topic. Let students draw their stories on each page (or use the computer to draw). Write captions on each page as the student tells what happened or let them write themselves. Read one or more stories to the whole class. Let the students read to each other if they want to do so.

** Interactive Journal/Dialogue Journal:*

This type of journaling involves a direct interaction between the teacher and the student. First, the student writes a few sentences to the teacher in a journal. The teacher responds to these sentences (not correcting) but modeling correct grammar and vocabulary, and prompts the student to respond. This interaction or dialogue can take place on the spot or over a period of days. The focus is on authentic communication, not on correct grammatical structures from the student.

* *Comic Strip:*

Students very much enjoy writing comic strips and using creativity to display understanding of concepts. They can either fill in the bubbles on comic strips that you provide (preferably comics that the students already know and enjoy), or create their own pictures and bubbles.

* *Making Lists:*

Students can make lists on the spot to review information, allow you as a teacher to elicit background knowledge, or try out something new.

* *Write (or draw) Three Things You Learned Today:*

Asking students to reflect immediately about what they learned during a class increases their level of awareness about content and language objectives and encourages metacognition (thinking about thinking). Since the writing process is one way that students can better process information, reflecting in writing about what was learned during a given lesson can have many benefits.

(For more information on these activities as well other ideas, see Brisk & Harrington, 2000 and Gibbons, 2002.)

Building Vocabulary

Vocabulary acquisition can be one of the most important factors of ELL student success in your classroom. ELLs are constantly in a state of “catching up” to native speakers; therefore, they must focus on new content-area vocabulary as well as academic vocabulary for higher-order thinking skills (analyze, synthesize, etc.), less common words and idiomatic expressions. In a traditional classroom, vocabulary is learned through dictionary definitions and by using new words in a sentence. Although dictionaries are valuable reference tools, the reading of dictionary definitions to learn lists of new words rarely results in long-term learning. Following are some vocabulary acquisition activities which might be more beneficial (Echevarria et al., 2000).

- personal dictionaries—students can keep track of new words and write down definitions in their own words for later reference
- picture dictionaries—students include the new word, as well as a picture which will help to jog their memory about the meaning or uses of the new word
- self-selection (proficient to advanced proficient)—students can find their own words on which to focus

- word wall—this is most beneficial if there is only one wall with important words in the classroom (multiple word walls can be too much of an overload). Once students seem to be using the words on the wall consistently and accurately, the words can be changed to a new group of words.
- concept definition map (also referred to as a semantic map)—this type of graphic organizer helps students to see the relationships among between new vocabulary words
- cloze sentences—this is a “fill-in-the-blank” activity which uses words in context which have already been studied to allow for vocabulary practice.
- word sorts—students are asked to categorize words or phrases in groups which have been predetermined by the teacher to demonstrate their knowledge of the relationship among the words
- word study books—new words or phrases are included in a text which the student can reference over an extended period of time

Meaningful vocabulary instruction should be focused on the use of vocabulary in multiple contexts and in both reading and listening activities. Traditional dictionary definitions have proven to be largely unsuccessful in the acquisition of new vocabulary (Echevarria et al., 2000). For reading purposes, texts that contain more than 10% of words that are unfamiliar to students are considered incomprehensible.

For meaningful vocabulary instruction, focus on the use of vocabulary in multiple contexts and in both reading and listening activities.

Teaching tips for developing all areas of literacy:

- use diverse literature to give all students different perspectives on culture
- select texts that are relevant to life experience and cultures of a variety of students
- to make literature more comprehensible:
 - use graphic organizers to illustrate the text structure
 - have students keep journals
- allow students to create graphic organizers, outlines, or drafts in the native language first to organize their thoughts and ideas, then rewrite in English

- pair students of the same native language but different levels of English proficiency
- assess either language use (specific items), or content, but not both at the same time, as this can be overwhelming for students (Jameson, 1998)

Supplementary materials

The use of outside materials in the classroom help students to connect concepts to background knowledge, as well as to make a visual connection (and sometimes physical, if they get to actually use the item) with the subject matter being taught. Some examples of supplementary materials include:

- hands-on manipulatives (for example, colored blocks for learning fractions)
- realia (anything from the outside world brought into the classroom to use as an example)
- pictures (large enough so students can see them and make connections)
- visuals (overhead charts, graphs, classroom maps, graphic organizers)
- multimedia (video and audio tapes, computer demonstrations)
- demonstrations (science experiments in front of the class)
- related literature
- adapted text (simpler sentences which include paraphrasing of new words).

Assessment

Assessment should be ongoing and include both formal and informal assessments. Informal assessments are any questions that you ask your students or tasks which you ask them to complete which demonstrate to you whether or not students have learned the concepts in order to attain the lesson objectives. This includes checks for understanding (discussed in the previous section). To check for understanding, the teacher uses direct methods of communication to ascertain that students are following along with the concepts being presented (and not just going by the looks on their faces).

Assess your students both formally and informally.

Formal assessments come in two forms: *traditional assessments*, and *performance assessments*. Traditional assessments are tests in which the student directly demonstrates specific knowledge of content, in line with unit objectives. Performance assessments are assessments where the learner takes the knowledge acquired and uses it to perform a related task.

An assessment is valid, if it really measures what it says it is measuring.

When evaluating assessments of ELLs, it is essential that the teacher evaluate the assessment to discover the assessment's validity. Validity refers to whether or not the test is really measuring what it says it's measuring (Jameson, 1998). Was the learner given the opportunity to demonstrate acquisition and application of the required concepts, even if it is difficult for the student to elaborate on this acquisition in English? If the objectives for the lesson included both content objectives and language objectives, then the assessment should be assessing both content and language acquisition. Otherwise, students should be given the opportunity to demonstrate what they know without dependence on advanced proficient use of English.

Tips for Content Area Instruction: Social Studies/History, Math and Science

Each content area has unique challenges that both students and teachers face when working together. The teachers have to consider not only the languages and cultures from which the students come, but also the characteristics of the learners and their relationship to the content being taught (Anstrom, 1997). This section will provide some tips that are specific to certain content areas. Within each content area section, the following subsections should be a helpful reference in your planning and teaching:

Teachers must consider not only the languages and cultures from which the students come, but also consider the characteristics of the learners and their relationship to the content being taught. (Anstrom, 1997)

Cultural differences: An explanation of possible cultural differences specific to this content area that could affect your students' learning.

Academic language challenges: An overview of language functions, syntactic (grammatical) features, semantic (meaning-based) and lexical (vocabulary) features common in or specific to this content area that can pose learning challenges for ELLs.

Teaching tips: A brief list of ideas for classroom instruction appropriate for ELLs.

Social studies

Cultural differences

Even students who have advanced knowledge of academic English have cultural issues with social studies if they were raised outside of the United States. United States history is taught primarily only in the United States, and students may be missing background knowledge that the other students in the class will obviously have. The old adage, "History is written by the winners," also comes into account here—one culture's depiction of world history might be vastly different from another's. When instructing in the area of social studies, teachers need to be aware that these cultural differences may exist, and that the historical perspective from which they are teaching is one of many.

Even students with outstanding academic English may be unfamiliar with U.S. history.

Academic language challenges

Remember that academic language refers to the kind of language used in school settings that can require cognitive and conceptual tasks of speakers that differ from those found in conversational contexts. Teachers must be aware of the academic language challenges common or specific to social studies so that language goals for ELLs can be embedded in lesson planning. Instruction should be designed to make material accessible and language tasks comprehensible. Students may also need explicit instruction and modeling in order to identify, comprehend, and use these various aspects of academic language effectively within the content area. The following table demonstrates some of the academic language features particular to social studies, with examples of each one.

Academic Language in Social Studies	
Language functions (ways that academic language is used)	
Explaining	“Explain the events leading up to the Revolution.” (This involves using the past tense and temporal signals.)
Describing	“Describe what you would have seen if you visited a battlefield at the time of the Civil War.” (This involves using the conditional tense in the past as well as special vocabulary.)
Defining	“Define the following terms: governor, legislator”
Giving examples	“Give examples of the ways that the colonies rebelled against British rule.” (past tense and special vocabulary)
Sequencing	“Describe the events that lead to the Declaration of Independence.” (past tense and special vocabulary)
Comparing	“Compare the time of the Revolution to today.” (comparative adjectives and sentence structures)
Syntactic (grammatical) features	
Simple past	Vote—voted, go—went, dig—dug
Historical present	“Abraham Lincoln is one of the most important presidents to have ever...”
Active voice and Passive voice	“The colonists won the Revolutionary War.” (Active) “The Revolutionary War was won by the colonists.” (Passive)
Lexical (Vocabulary) features	
Temporal signals	First, then, next, finally, at last, eventually, etc.
Signaling of cause and effect	As a result of..., therefore, because, because of, caused by, etc.

Source (as cited in Solomon & Rhodes, 1995): Short, 1994; Coelho, 1982; Chamot & O'Malley, 1986

Teaching tips for social studies

- use a thematic approach (Farr and Trumbull, 1997)
- link to prior knowledge, even if it's different from mainstream knowledge (ex: The Civil War is like other conflicts that come from differences)
- use oral history to show that history is composed of stories like the ones in which they and their families have participated
- use a variety of instructional approaches, including cooperative learning for concept attainment (August and Pease-Alvarez, 1996)
- use visuals and realia.

Source for teaching tips for social studies: Anstrom, 1997

Math

Cultural differences

Many people assume that math is the easiest content area for students to transition into because of its reliance on symbols instead of language. It is often deemed to be “culture-free.” Consider the following cultural differences that exist in the way that math is used around the world: (Jameson, 1998)

**Math is not culture-
and language-free.**

Hand writing of numbers:

United States:

Other Cultures:

1: | or 1

A handwritten number 1 from other cultures, which is a cursive, slanted shape with a small loop at the top and a tail that curves to the left.

7: 7

A handwritten number 7 from other cultures, which is a cursive, slanted shape with a horizontal bar at the top and a vertical stem that curves to the left.

Someone from another culture might see a seven written in the United States as a one.

Other cultural differences include the ways that certain mathematical functions are performed. Consider the way that American children are taught to divide: (Jameson, 1998)

quotient 122 r4 remainder
 divisor 7) 858 dividend
 computations are
 written here

Some cultures perform division using the following format:

dividend 858 | 7 | divisor
 computations are 122 | quotient
 written here
 remainder 4 |

Even students who understand the same mathematical concepts might not have the same background knowledge as the other students.

Academic language challenges

Remember that academic language refers to the kind of language used in school settings that can require cognitive and conceptual tasks of speakers that differ from those found in conversational contexts. Teachers must be aware of the academic language challenges common or specific to math so that language goals for ELLs can be embedded in lesson planning. Instruction should be designed to make material accessible and language tasks comprehensible. Students may also need explicit instruction and modeling in order to identify, comprehend, and use these various aspects of academic language effectively within the content area. The following table demonstrates some of the academic language features particular to math, with examples of each one.

Academic Language in Math	
Syntactic features	
Comparatives	Greater than/ less than
Passive Voice	"9 is divided by 3" can be confusing, because the student must understand the passive voice to see how that computation is different from "divide 3 into 9." (These are the same computation, but the word order is different in the two sentences.)
Uses of Prepositions	1/5 of the pie, divide 7 into 35
Complex strings of words	Least common denominator

Academic Language in Math (continued)	
Lexical (vocabulary) features	
Synonymous words and phrases	Add, plus, combine
Ordinary vocabulary with different meanings in math	Square, power, table
Logical Connectors	If...then, given that
Other features	
Mathematical symbols and notations	As we have seen, the methods used for computations vary from culture to culture.

Source (as cited in Solomon & Rhodes, 1995): Spanos et al., 1988

Teaching tips for math:

- use a multi-sensory, activity-centered approach
- engage students in solving interesting, real-life problems that encourage both critical thinking and basic skill development and practice
- work from concrete, problem-solving situations to more abstract, context-reduced ones (start with word problems and examples, then move to math without context).
- provide opportunities for individual, small group, and whole-class work
- use a variety of instructional methods, such as direct instruction, guided discovery, cooperative learning, and computer-assisted instruction.
- use journal writing to encourage students to explore and write about various strategies for using math to encourage self-awareness and metacognition (awareness of own thinking).

Prompt examples for journals (Bagley & Gallenberger, 1992):

- (Display a picture.) Construct a word problem that can be solved mathematically.
- What is the most important idea you've learned this week, and why?
- Write a paragraph containing as many of these words as possible:
- List some things you must remember when answering this type of question or doing this type of problem.

Source for teaching tips for math: Anstrom, 1997

Science

Cultural differences

Cultural issues in the field of science are apparent even within the American culture. Some religious doctrines conflict with prevalent theories in the field of science, such as the theory of evolution. Other scientific methodologies (such as the scientific method or the scientific focus on classification) can be foreign concepts to students from some cultures. Teachers of science need to be aware that these cultural differences may exist, and be prepared to address them in a way that students from other cultures do not feel that they must deny their own cultures in order to learn about science in the United States. There are many different ways of looking at the world, and the American scientific field is just one of these ways.

Academic language challenges

Remember that academic language refers to the kind of language used in school settings that can require cognitive and conceptual tasks of speakers that differ from those found in conversational contexts. Teachers must be aware of the academic language challenges common or specific to science so that language goals for ELLs can be embedded in lesson planning. Instruction should be designed to make material accessible and language tasks comprehensible. Students may also need explicit instruction and modeling in order to identify, comprehend, and use these various aspects of academic language effectively within the content area. The following table demonstrates some of the academic language features particular to science, with examples of each one.

Academic Language in Science	
Language functions (ways that academic language is used)	
Formulating hypotheses	"Develop a hypothesis to explain why plants grow taller in sunlight."
Proposing alternative solutions	"You have found that plants grow taller when they are exposed to more sunlight. What are some other reasons that the plants may have grown taller?" (uses complex verb forms to describe possibilities)
Describing	"Describe the plants used in your study." (requires a wide range of vocabulary)
Classifying	"Classify your plants into the appropriate areas." (requires not only understanding where they go, but being able to linguistically justify their placements)

Academic Language in Science (continued)	
Inferring	“Based on the evidence available to you, infer the reasons why...” (uses complex verb forms to describe possibilities)
Interpreting data	“Following is a table showing... Based on the information in the table...” (must be able to justify interpretations)
Predicting	“Based on the evidence available, predict what would happen if you...” (uses complex verb forms to describe that which does not exist)
Generalizing	“Given the data available to you, make a generalization about how plants grow.” (must be able to synthesize all information available and justify conclusions)
Communicating findings	“What were the results of your experience?” (uses multiple forms of the past tense, as well as non-contextualized information)
Syntactic (grammatical) features	
Passive voice and active voice	“The leaf is eaten by the insect.” (Passive.). “The insect eats the leaf.” (Active) Without understanding the difference between the passive and active voice, it can be difficult for an ELL to know who is eating and who is being eaten.
Use of noun phrases	“Vibrations in the inner ear (noun phrase) pass through...”
Lexical (vocabulary) features	
Sequence of events (temporal signals)	First, then, next, finally, at last, eventually, etc.
Ordinary vocabulary with different meanings in science	Table, energy, kingdom
Interlocking definitions	“Digestive system, stomach, stomach acid,” all use one another in their definitions.
Technical taxonomies	Kingdoms of life

Source (as cited in Solomon & Rhodes, 1995): NSTA, 1991; Chamot & O'Malley, 1986; Halliday, 1989

Teaching tips for science

- provide hands-on activities that provide opportunities for purposeful language use in meaningful academic experiences.
- provide a variety of venues where a student can learn a particular science concept
- spend more time learning fewer concepts to allow for a deeper level of understanding
- use unit organizers to demonstrate how activities are structured and tied together
- limit new terminology to a manageable number
- use visual or real referents whenever possible
- reintroduce technical vocabulary in different contexts
- use repetition, paraphrasing and the active voice (e.g.: “Living things need nutrients,” instead of “Nutrients are needed by living things.”)
- adapt written materials into charts, outlines, or simplified prose without losing the concepts
- add simplified background info if necessary (for example, by use of a jump-start mini lesson—see next section)
- model think-alouds to guide students from data to wondering to hypothesizing
- use a three-tiered modeling approach, which involves guided presentation which proceeds to group activity which then proceeds to open-ended individual study. This allows a natural progression through the stages of language learning: observing to solving, listening to speaking, interacting to initiating (Fatham et al, 1992).

Source: Anstrom, 1997

Additional Learning and Teaching Tools

This section is comprised of additional learning and teaching tools that make your classroom more amenable to second language learners.

Learning tools:

- graphic organizers
- student portfolios
- adapted materials

Graphic Organizers

Graphic organizers allow material to be presented in such a way that is less dependent on text and involves a visual display of the relationship between concepts, or the progression from one concept to another. One method developed by Gloria Tang, a professor at the University of British Columbia, is called “From Text to Graphics and Back Again” (Jameson, 1998). In this method, teachers organize and present concepts from the text to students in a graphic organizer. Once students understand the information presented in the graphic organizers, they can create their own texts demonstrating this knowledge.

Graphic organizers include:

- **Timelines**
- **Tables**
- **Relationship webs**
- **Charts**
- **Venn diagrams**
- **Outlines**
- **Graphs**

To use graphic organizers the way Tang did, start by identifying the key concepts of the unit or chapter. Organize these graphically, using subsequent organizers to give further detail to the concepts. It is helpful to use the same few graphic organizers repeatedly, because this will make it easier for students to identify regular patterns.

Graphic organizers must accurately depict the information and concepts in the text or unit, and contain key vocabulary. In order to scaffold the use of graphic organizers, teachers begin by selecting or creating the organizer to be used, and filling in the organizer. After a while, students select an appropriate graphic organizer (with teacher guidance), and the teacher fills it in. Finally, groups of students (or individual students) are able to both select or create their own organizers, and fill them in on their own. This progressive nature allows for students to develop independence with regard to the use of graphic organizers. (Developed by Gloria Tang, in Jameson, 1998)

See Appendix B for samples of completed graphic organizers.

Student portfolios

Portfolios of student work which are built over an extended period of time are an excellent way to track progress. They can demonstrate to the learner, the teacher, the parent, and administrators what kind of progress the student has made with regard to both language acquisition and content area topics. Portfolios also provide the student with a way of reviewing important concepts at the end of units, especially if journals are included. Artifacts of student work which include projects, graphic organizers, drawings, and writing activities will help the student to connect with his or her understanding of the concept while it was being learned.

Portfolios allow teacher and student to see progress over time.

Adapted materials for ELLs

Adapting written texts

An adapted text focuses on the key concepts of a topic, with each paragraph sharing the same, consistent format of a topic sentence and supporting details.

Information is made more accessible to ELL students when text has been adapted. This is worthwhile when you have more than one or two ELL students in a class (otherwise, other levels of adaptation, such as partner sharing, may be more efficient). An adapted text focuses on the key concepts of a topic, with each paragraph sharing the same, consistent format of a topic sentence and supporting details. Paraphrasing (using "that is," or "in other words," for less common words), simple sentence structures (fewer embedded clauses), and limited use of pronouns are elements of adapted texts that are helpful to ELLs. (Echevarria et al., 2000)

Leveled study guides

Students can greatly benefit from a study guide that previews what they are going to learn or read. Such a guide can also serve as a tool for review at the end of the lesson. It can be in the form of an outline or graphic organizer, which makes the information more accessible (Echevarria et al., 2000).

Jump-start mini lesson

No matter where students have come from, they often have learned different things in their homeland than what the other students in your class have

learned. Therefore, there may be gaps in their background knowledge that need to be filled before the students can fully grasp the new concepts being presented.

Remember that all students, regardless of language ability, should be able to learn and understand new concepts.

Remember that all students, regardless of language ability, should be able to learn and understand new concepts. It can help these students to have a mini-lesson in a small group at the beginning of class to fill gaps in background knowledge. Although in-depth understanding of these preliminary concepts might not be reached (they might have to be satisfied with knowing certain facts without necessarily knowing why), ideally they will understand previous concepts enough to be able to use them to understand the lesson you will be presenting for the day. (Echevarria et al., 2000)

SIOP Lesson Protocol: What Do Effective Lessons Look Like?

The SIOP (Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol) Model is one way of measuring the degree to which a teacher is teaching to all students. It is a list of thirty items that should be included in a teacher's repertoire. It also provides a helpful guideline for your own lesson planning. Although a given lesson will not necessarily address each of the thirty items, each item should be touched upon at least every week. This is an excellent tool to use for a focused observation. Have it in front of you and see how well each item is addressed in the class on a scale of 1-5. Following is an overview of the 30 items, grouped into eight categories, and adapted from Echevarria et al (2000).

SIOP addresses:

- **lesson preparation**
- **instruction**
- **review and assessment**

Lesson Preparation

1. Clearly defined content objectives for students
2. Clearly defined language objectives for students
3. Content concepts appropriate for age and educational background level of students
4. Supplementary materials used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful (e.g., graphs, models, visuals)
5. Adaptation of content (text, assignments, etc.) to all levels of students' proficiency
6. Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts (surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking

Instruction: Building Background

7. Concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences
8. Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts
9. Key vocabulary emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see)

Instruction: Comprehensible Input

10. Speech appropriate for students' proficiency level (e.g. slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners)
11. Explanation of academic tasks clear
12. Variety of techniques make content concepts clear (e.g. modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, body language)

Instruction: Strategies

13. Ample opportunities for students to use strategies
14. Consistent use of scaffolding techniques throughout the lesson, assisting and supporting student understanding
15. Variety of questions types, including those that promote higher-order thinking skills (e.g. literal, analytical, and interpretive questions)

Instruction: Interaction

16. Frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion between teacher/student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts
17. Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson
18. Sufficient wait time for student responses
19. Ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in L1 (their first language) as needed with aide, peer, or L1 text (if resources are available)

Instruction: Practice/application

20. Hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge
21. Activities for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom
22. Activities that integrate all language skills (reading, writing, listening, and speaking)

Instruction: Lesson delivery

23. Content objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery
24. Language objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery
25. Students engaged approximately 90% to 100% of the time
26. Pacing of the lesson appropriate to the students' ability level

Review and Assessment

27. Comprehensive review of key vocabulary
28. Comprehensive review of key content concepts
29. Feedback to students on their output (i.e., language, content, work)
30. Assessment of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g. spot checking, group response) throughout the lesson

Glossary of Terms

Academic language: Language used in formal contexts for academic subjects. The aspect of language connected with literacy and academic achievement. This includes technical and academic terms.

Additive bilingualism: Rather than neglecting or rejecting students' language and culture, additive bilingualism promotes building on what the child brings to the classroom and adding to it. (Contrast with subtractive bilingualism)

Assessment: The orderly process of gathering, analyzing, interpreting, and reporting student performance, ideally from multiple sources over a period of time.

BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills): Face-to-face conversational fluency, including mastery of pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. English language learners typically acquire conversational language used in everyday activities before they develop more complex, conceptual language proficiency.

CALP (Cognitive/Academic Language Proficiency): Language proficiency associated with schooling, and the abstract language abilities required for academic work. It is a complex, conceptual, linguistic ability that includes analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

Cognates: Words that are related in origin in related languages, such as "observe" in English and "observar" in Spanish; or, "identify" in English and "identifier" in French.

Cross-cultural competence: The ability to understand and follow the cultural rules and norms of more than one system. The ability to respond to the demands of a given situation in a culturally acceptable way.

ELLs (English language learners): Children and adults who are learning English as a second or additional language. This term may apply to learners across various levels of proficiency in English. ELLs may also be referred to as non-English speaking (NES), limited English proficient (LEP), and a non-native speaker (NNS).

ESL: English as a second language.

L1: First language. A widely used abbreviation for the primary, home, or native language. The second language is often referred to as L2.

Language objectives: Statements that identify what students should know and be able to do while using English (or another language.) They support students' language development, often focusing on vocabulary, functional language, questioning, articulating predictions or hypotheses, reading, writing, and so forth.

Language proficiency: An individual's competence in using a language for basic communication and for academic purposes. May be categorized as stages of language acquisition.

LEP (Limited English Proficient): A term used to refer to a student with restricted understanding or use of written and spoken English; a learner who is still developing competence in using English.

Mnemonics: From the Greek *mnemon*, meaning "mindful". Mnemonics are devices to jog the memory. For example, steps of a learning strategy are often abbreviated to form an acronym or word that enables the learner to remember the steps.

Nonverbal communication: Paralinguistic messages such as intonation, stress, pauses and rate of speech, and nonlinguistic messages such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language that can accompany speech or be conveyed without the aid of speech.

Realia: Real-life objects and artifacts used to supplement teaching; can provide effective visual scaffolds for English language learners.

Scaffolding: Adult (e.g., teacher) support for learning and student performance of the tasks through instruction, modeling, questioning, feedback, graphic organizers, and more, across successive engagements. These supports are gradually withdrawn, thus transferring more and more autonomy to the child. Scaffolding activities provide support for learning that can be removed as learners are able to demonstrate strategic behaviors in their own learning activities.

Sheltered instruction (SI): An approach to teaching that extends the time students have for receiving English language support while they learn content subjects. SI classrooms, which may include a mix of native English speakers and English language learners or only ELLs, integrate language and content while infusing sociocultural awareness. Teachers scaffold instruction to aid student comprehension of content topics and objectives by adjusting their speech and instructional tasks, and by providing appropriate background information and experiences. The ultimate goal is accessibility for ELLs to grade-level content standards and concepts while they continue to improve their English language proficiency.

Sociocultural competence: The ability to function effectively by following the rules and behavioral expectations held by members of a given social or cultural group.

Standard American English: “That variety of American English in which most educational texts, government, and media publications are written in the United States; English as it is spoken and written by those groups with social, economic, and political power in the United States. Standard American English is a relative concept, varying widely in pronunciation and in idiomatic use but maintaining a fairly uniform grammatical structure.” (Harris and Hodges, 1995, p. 241).

Subtractive bilingualism: The learning of a new language at the expense of the primary language. Learners often lose their native language and culture because they don't have opportunities to continue learning or using it, or they perceive that language to be of lower status. Loss of the primary language often leads to cultural ambivalence.

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Appendix A—Sample Student/Parent Survey

Ideally, this survey would also be translated into the student's and parents' native language as well. This would be given to the student's parents at the beginning of the year (or whenever the student arrives).

Getting to Know You Better

Student's Name: _____ Age _____

Grade: _____

Reasons for coming to the United States: _____

Intended length of stay in the U.S. _____

Where else have you lived? _____

Parents' occupation _____

Languages student speaks or hears at home: _____

When does he/she use this language? _____

Student's previous school experience _____
Where? _____ How long? _____

Language used for speaking _____

Language used for reading/writing (if applicable) _____

Student's Birthday: _____

Favorite food: _____

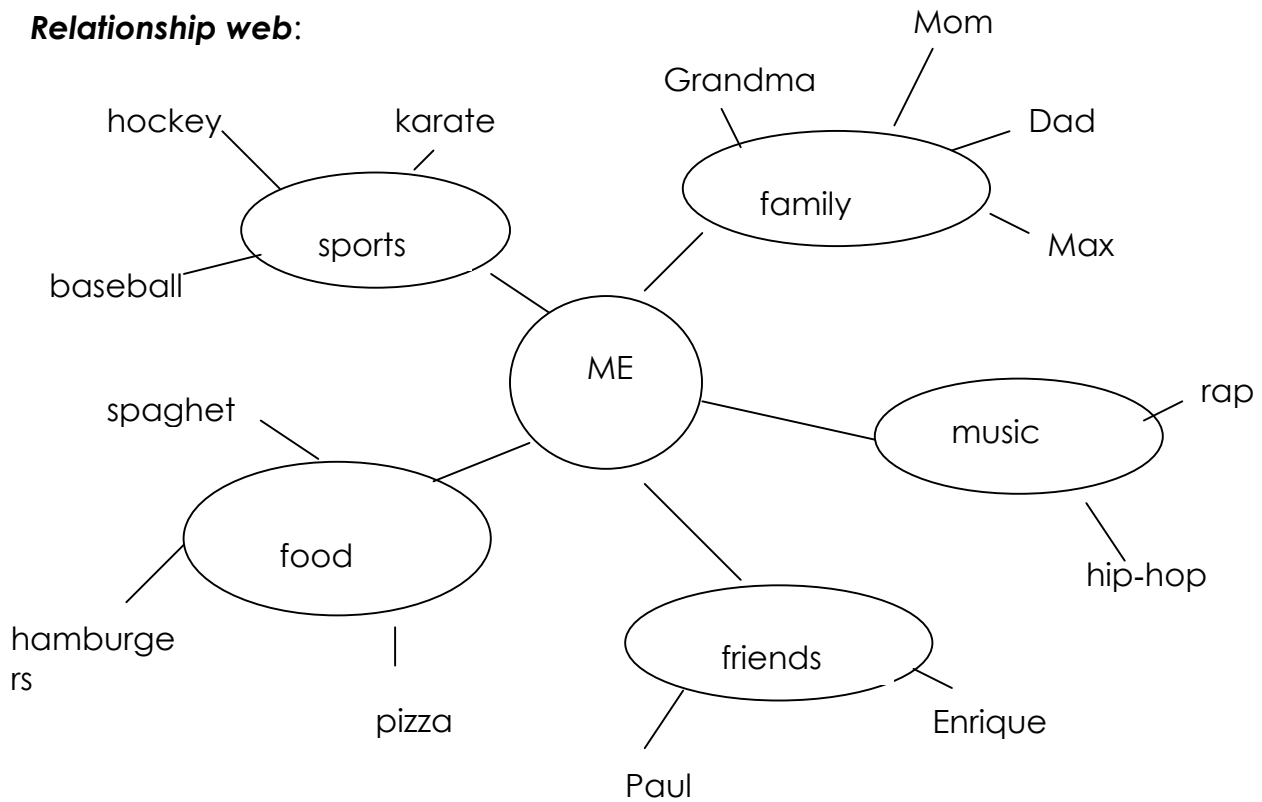
Music student likes: _____

Instruments student plays or wants to learn: _____

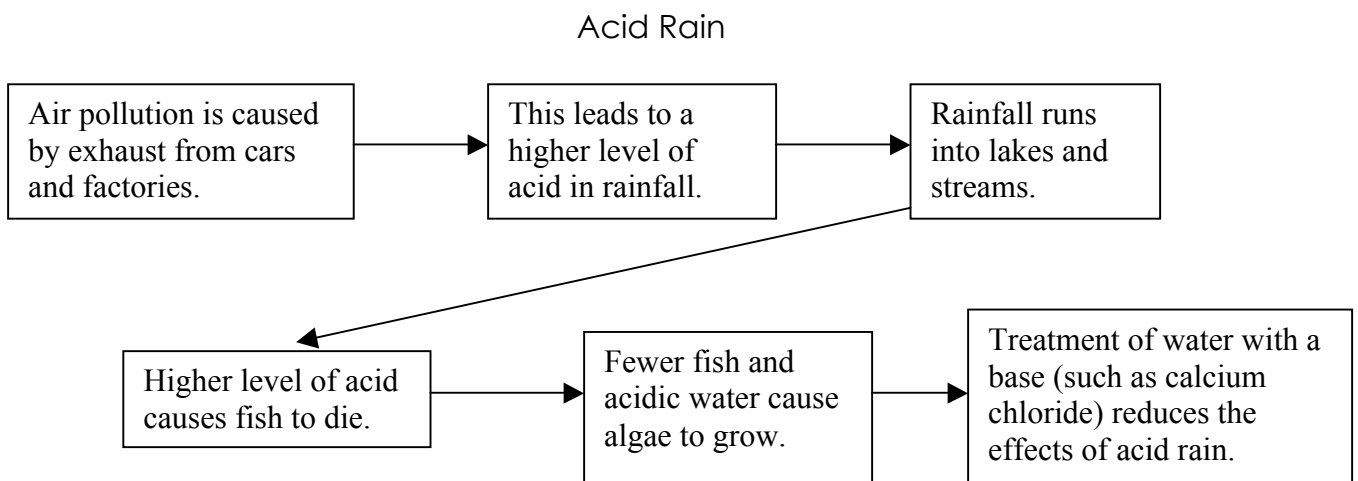
Student's outside of school responsibilities: _____

Appendix B: Sample Graphic Organizers

Relationship web:



Charts (cause/effect, etc.)



Venn Diagrams

A Comparison of Paris and New York City

