THE ESL/ELL Teacher's SURVIVAL GUIDE

Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools & Activities for Teaching All Levels

Second Edition

Larry Ferlazzo
Katie Hull Sypnieski

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Praise for *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide*

"An engaging, practical, and highly accessible book . . . . The authors share strategies that have been proven effective through research as well as their own practice. There is truly something valuable for any teacher, even those who have extensive experience with ESL classes."

—**PIA WONG**, professor, Bilingual/Multicultural Education,
California State University, Sacramento

"This is an invaluable resource for all new and experienced teachers who desire to see their language learning students thrive and achieve at high levels."

—**DANA DUSBIBER**, classroom teacher with over 30 years
of experience working with ELLs

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& Activities for Teaching All Levels

LARRY FERLAZZO AND KATIE HULL SYPNIESKI

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About the Authors

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Ferlazzo was a community organizer for 19 years prior to becoming a public school teacher. He is married and has three children and four grandchildren.

Katie Hull Sypnieski has taught English language learners of all proficiency levels and English-proficient students for 25 years in the Sacramento City Unified School District. She has served as a teaching consultant with the Area 3 Writing Project housed at University of California-Davis for the past 20 years.

She has co-authored three books on teaching ELLs and has co-edited three books on education. She has published articles and instructional videos for *Education Week*. In addition, she has co-authored articles for *Edutopia, The New York Times Learning Network*, and *ASCD Educational Leadership*.

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Larry and Katie have co-authored two other books on teaching English language learners, *The ELL Teacher's Toolbox* and *Navigating the Common Core with English Language Learners*, both from Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Contents

Bonus Web Content

Companion papers are available online, at www.wiley.com/go/eslsurvivalguide2, on these topics related to teaching english online and around the world:

- Distance Learning
- Teaching English Internationally
- Non Native English Speakers Teaching English
- Teaching Science (from 1ˢᵗ edition)
- Teaching Math (from 1ˢᵗ edition)

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Laura Gibbs
Stephen Fleenor
Cindy Garcia
Valentina Gonzalez
Antoinette Perez
Jessica Bell
Tan Huynh
Carol Salva
Jenny Vo
Lorie Hammond

About the Contributors

*N*ine other educators have made sizable contributions to this second edition.

Laura Gibbs received her PhD in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley in 1999. She joined the University of Oklahoma faculty where she taught online courses in folklore and mythology; she retired from teaching in 2021 in order to write full-time. She is the author of a translation of *Aesop's Fables* for Oxford University Press, and she is also the author of a free OER book series: *Tiny Tales*, which is available online at LauraGibbs.net.

Stephen Fleenor is an educational consultant in San Antonio, Texas with Seidlitz Education (www.seidlitzeducation.com). Stephen earned a PhD in Developmental Neurobiology from the University of Oxford before teaching high school science in a highly disadvantaged community in San Antonio. His pedagogy developed out of a passion to serve English learners and other at-risk students while spreading his love for science. As a facilitator of professional development and developer of educational materials, he advocates for a growth-minded approach to teaching and learning that encourages and strengthens learners' academic expression.

Cindy Garcia has been a bilingual educator for 15 years and is currently a districtwide specialist for P-6 bilingual/ESL mathematics. She is active on Twitter at @CindyGarciaTX and on her blog (https://teachingelementaryels.weebly.com/).

Valentina Gonzalez has more than 20 years of experience teaching and working with multilingual students from around the globe. Her personal experience as an immigrant from Yugoslavia and language learner fuel her desire to advocate for English learners and support teachers with the best research-based teaching methods. Her work's primary focuses have been on literacy, culture, and language. Valentina is the coauthor of *Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5*.

Antoinette Perez has more than 10 years of experience working with English Language Learners of all levels, including extensive experience with international and adult learners. She has worked in California and Georgia at schools with high percentages of ELs, which motivated her to obtain TEFL certification to teach English abroad. She currently serves as the English Co-Department Chair at Buena High School in Ventura, California where she runs the ELD program and teaches honors and AP English. In another capacity, she instructs online English classes for children and adults. Her dedication to students and ESL instruction has taken her around the world to enrich her ability to connect with students and enhance her professional practice.

Jessica Bell, M.Ed, taught English and ENL for 19 years, serving students from a diverse mix of backgrounds. A SIOP practitioner while in the classroom, she believes all students deserve equitable access to rigorous academic instruction. Jessica has transitioned from the classroom to the EdTech space, helping provide teachers with digitals tools to enhance instruction.

Tan Huynh (@TanKHuynh) is a career teacher specializing in language acquisition. He nerds out on all things related to multilingual students and shares what he has learned from experts, scholars, and master teachers through his writings, podcast, courses, conference, and workshops.

Carol Salva is an international education consultant with elementary, middle and high school teaching experience. She provides sheltered instruction workshops,

coaching and modeling through Seidlitz Education. Carol is the co-author of *Boosting Achievement: Reaching Students with Interrupted or Minimal Education.*

Jenny Vo earned her B.A. in English from Rice University and her M.Ed in Educational Leadership from Lamar University. She has worked with English Learners during all of her 27 years in education, first in Houston Independent School District and then in Katy Independent School District. Jenny recently made the move to International Leadership of Texas and serves as the Houston area EL Coordinator. Jenny has served on the Board of TexTESOL IV for several years and was the 2020–2021 president. She works to advocate for all English learners and enjoys sharing her knowledge and passion with others at local and state conferences. She loves learning from her #PLN on Twitter so feel free to follow her @ JennyVo15.

Introduction

There was a great forest fire—everything was burning and all the animals were scared and didn't know what they could do. A hummingbird, though, went to a lake and got a drop of water. It flew to the fire and dropped the water there, and it kept on going back again. The other animals kept on telling the hummingbird that it was wasting its time, telling it there was no way a little water was going to make a difference. The hummingbird replied, "I'm doing the best I can."

—Modern ecological parable[1]

The hummingbird did its best in the face of many challenges and adversity, and nothing could stop it.

While it would have been ideal for the hummingbird to organize all the animals to join it in fighting the fire, always encouraging the use of that kind of strategy is not the main point of the story or this book. This book is primarily designed to help secondary-level ELL teachers do the best they can in their classrooms (though it does also include a chapter on how to help mainstream educators make their content more accessible to English language learners, too). In addition, the majority of approaches and strategies we discuss can be easily modified for younger ELLs.

This book is primarily written by two committed and experienced educators who have a rich family life outside of school, plan on continuing to teach for years to come, and who are always interested in providing high-quality education to their students without requiring enormous extra work for the teacher. In addition, nine—count 'em, *nine*—other very experienced educators have contributed towards making this book nearly twice the size of the first edition!

It is not written by or for teachers who lack awareness of their own limitations and what is needed to stay in education for the long haul.

This book is a careful distillation of selected instructional strategies that have been used successfully by us for years in the classroom.

It is not a laundry list of every ELL teaching method that's been discussed in the literature.

In addition to providing a selective review of ELL teaching methods, this book shares highly regarded research supporting just about everything we suggest.

It is not just speaking from our experience and what we think is good. This book shares numerous specific suggestions about how ELL teachers can use technology to bring a value-added benefit to their language-learning students.

It is not a treatise on how educational technology is the "magic bullet" that is always (or even often) superior to nontech strategies.

This book recognizes that teachers need to deal with standards (we discuss both Common Core and The Next Generation Science Standards), textbooks, and standardized tests. This book also recognizes that not everything always goes according to plan, and includes a lengthy chapter on how to deal with potential problems. This book understands the realities of what work in the classroom world actually is like.

It does not offer a pie-in-the-sky view assuming we operate in an ideal classroom world all the time.

This book emphasizes the importance of learners being co-creators of their education.

It does not encourage the teacher being the "sage on stage."

The point of this book is not to claim it is the be-all and end-all for ELL teacher professional development. We strongly encourage teachers and their schools to develop ongoing mentor relationships with experienced educator organizations, and we recommend three of them in the Afterword.

This book does not promote the idea that any teacher is an island and only needs a few books and informal professional relationships to reach his full potential.

We hope that you can gain from the second edition of this guide at least as much as we learned from writing it.

Bonus Web Content

The last five chapters are "web-only" and available without any registration required. These include the original chapters on teaching Science and Math that appeared in the first edition. This second edition contains entirely new chapters, but we still believe the original ones can be very helpful to teachers of ELLs. Two of the chapters relate to teaching internationally. We thought that putting them online would increase their accessibility to teachers outside of the United States. The final chapter is about distance learning, and Wiley graciously allowed us to put it freely online in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (though, we have made some minor changes since then). Numerous Tech Tools supporting the lessons and instructional strategies that we discuss are highlighted throughout this book. In addition, we have a lengthy web page listing links to all the tools we cite, as well as to many others that we did not have space to include. All Exhibits (primarily student handouts) in the book can also be downloaded. Readers can access these resources by going to www .wiley.com/go/eslsurvivalguide2.

PART ONE

Getting Started with English Language Learners

ELL Instruction: The Big Picture

*L*ong ago a wise, old teacher lived in a village near a range of mountains. Climbing the highest of these mountains was considered an important accomplishment, and all the young boys of the village couldn't wait until they were old enough to make the climb on their own.

One night, the wise teacher gathered a group of boys together and said to them, "You have reached the age to take on the challenge. Tomorrow you may all go and climb that mountain with my blessings. Go as far as you can, and when you are tired, turn around and come home. Remember to bring back a twig from the place where you turned around."

The next morning, the boys began the long-awaited climb. A few hours later, one of the boys returned with a piece of buckthorn. The teacher smiled and said, "I can see you made it to the first rockslide. Wonderful!" Later in the afternoon, another boy arrived with a cedar frond. "You made it halfway up! Well done!" remarked the teacher. An hour later another boy returned with a branch of pine, and the teacher said, "Good job. It looks like you made it three-quarters of the way. If you keep trying, next year you will surely reach the top!"

As the sun began to set, the teacher began to worry about the last boy, who still had not returned. Just when the teacher was about to send out a search party, the boy finally returned. He ran to the teacher and held out his hand. His hand was empty, but his eyes sparkled with happiness as he said, "Teacher, there were no trees where I turned around. I saw no twigs, no living things at the very top of the peak, and far away I could see the majestic sun shining off the sea."

The teacher's eyes also sparkled with joy as he proclaimed, "I knew it! When I looked in your eyes I could see that you made it! You have been to the top! It

shines in your eyes and sings in your voice! My son, you do not need twigs or branches as prizes of your victory. You have felt the prize in your spirit because you have seen the wonder of the mountain!"[1]

This tale describes the satisfaction and joy felt by the boy who reached the mountain's peak and witnessed the compelling view from the top. He didn't return with any physical "prizes" but instead carried the treasures of his journey within himself. The next time he climbs the mountain, he will be motivated from within, not because there are tokens or prizes to be collected.

As educators, we hope all of our students will "see the view from the peak" and will feel compelled to take on many more journeys as they learn and grow. Researcher Stephen Krashen explains how "compelling input" relates to language learning: Compelling means that the input is so interesting you forget that it is in another language. It means you are in a state of "flow."[2] In flow, the concerns of everyday life and even the sense of self disappear—our sense of time is altered and nothing but the activity itself seems to matter.[3]

This idea will be reflected throughout this book as we identify and describe research-based instructional strategies and approaches that "compel" students to want to learn English. Compelling input can help students "reach the peak" of acquiring language without seeking external rewards. However, it is ultimately important for students to come to their own conclusions about the value of "reaching the peak." Once students see the value of language learning and become intrinsically motivated to learn English, they will take the risk and climb that mountain over and over again. Sometimes they will need encouragement and support from us, especially when the peak is obscured by clouds along the way.

This book contains strategies and tools for teachers of English Language Learners to act as guides on this trek up the mountain. We hope it will help you feel prepared and excited about this journey. We know that everyone's trail will be different, and we hope this "survival guide" will serve as a compass rather than a direct map.

In the following subsections we will lay out a big picture of ELL instruction, including statistics on the English language learner population, research on language development, and several ELL instructional best practices. Later chapters will go into more detail on how to implement these big picture research findings and practices in your own classroom.

ELL Population Growth

It is hard to find a school district in this country that doesn't have an English Language Learner population. For teachers in states like Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, it is

sometimes hard to find a school or even a classroom without any English language learners. ELL enrollment in K-12 schools increased 28 percent between the 2000–2001 school year and the 2016–2017 school year.[4] In fact, the US Department of Education estimates that approximately five million English language learners are enrolled in public schools across the country—roughly 10 percent of all students enrolled in K–12 schools in the United States.[5]

While English learners in this country come from over 400 different language backgrounds, the majority (around 75 percent) of English Language Learners are Spanish speakers.[6] Arabic and Chinese are the second most common home languages spoken among ELLs (accounting for 2.7 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of the ELL population).[7] English is the fourth most common home language (spoken by about 2 percent of ELLs) and may reflect students raised in multilingual households as well as students adopted from other countries who were raised speaking a different language but who now live in an English-speaking household.[8]

US school districts in more urban areas have higher percentages of ELL students. ELLs make up 14 percent of students in city school districts, compared with just 4 percent in rural districts. Suburban districts and towns fall in the middle with ELLs making up 9 percent and 6 percent of total public school enrollees.[9]

In general, most ELLs are in the elementary school grades. In 2018, 15.1 percent of kindergarteners were ELL students, 8.9 percent of 6th-graders and 7.4 percent of 8th-graders were ELLs. Only 5.1 percent of 12th graders were ELL students. It is believed this pattern reflects, in part, students who were identified as ELLs when they entered elementary school but gained enough English Language Proficiency by the upper grades to be reclassified as proficient.[10] However, the majority of public school districts in the United States do have English Language Learners in their high schools. In fact, 62 percent of public high schools have at least some number of ELLs enrolled with around 800,000 high school ELL students nationwide.[11]

How Are English Language Learners Described?

ELLs are a diverse, dynamic group, which is evident in the variety of terms used to describe them. Here are several of the most common:

ELL, or English Language Learner. *ELL (or EL)* is the most common term currently used in the United States to describe students who are in various stages of acquiring English and who require different levels of language support and development in order to become fully proficient in English.

Emergent Bilingual. The term emergent bilingual, coined and popularized by Dr. Ofelia García, focuses on "an asset-based view of the capabilities of emergent bilingual students, who are simultaneously acquiring a new set of

linguistic capabilities in school and building on the valuable knowledge of their first language."[12]

EMLL, or Emergent Multilingual Learner. *EMLL, or Multilingual Learner (MLL)*, further expands the term *emergent bilingual* to highlight students as speakers of multiple languages with many linguistic resources upon which they can build.[13]

DLL, or Dual language learner. A DLL is a child between the ages of zero and eight and who is in the process of learning English in addition to their home language(s) or who is learning two or more languages at the same time. DLLs may or may not be considered English language learners by their schools, depending on their performance on English language proficiency assessments.[14]

LEP, or limited English proficiency. *LEP* was used for many years by the US Department of Education for ELLs who had not yet demonstrated proficiency in English, according to state standards and assessments. When referring to students, the term LEP has been replaced by the term English Learner (EL) or ELL. However, when referring to parents of ELLs, the Department of Education still refers to them as LEP (Limited English Proficient) parents.[15]

ESL, or English as a Second Language. The term *ESL* was formerly used as a designation for ELL students, but is more commonly used as a general term for a program of instruction (e.g., the study of English in an English-speaking country) or a field of study.[16] ESL is sometimes still used at the postsecondary level to refer to multilingual students.

ELD, or English language development. *ELD* is often used to describe instruction and programs for ELL students that focus on specifically developing English language proficiency in the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. ELD differs from *Sheltered Instruction* where instruction in a content area is being "adjusted" or scaffolded in order to help students learn content skills and knowledge while also supporting the learning of English. To put it simply, ELD instruction is mainly focused on developing proficiency in English, while Sheltered Instruction focuses on academic success in the content areas.[17]

TESOL, or Teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL* is widely used to describe both TESL (teaching English as a Second Language) and TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language). In general, TESL tends to emphasize the needs of English language learners living in English-speaking countries who will need to use English in their daily lives, while TEFL involves teaching English as a foreign language in countries where English is not widely used.[18]

Many educators and researchers, including the authors of this book, prefer the term *ELL* because it emphasizes that students are active *learners* of English, as opposed to being limited or deficient in some way.

Adolescent English Language Learners

Adolescent ELL students are a fast-growing population and come from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds.

Newcomer or refugee students represent a smaller, but highly vulnerable section of the adolescent English learner population. While it is difficult to know exactly how many newly arrived immigrant learners enroll in secondary schools each year, data suggests in 2015 around 42 percent of ELLs in US schools grades 6–12 were foreign-born.[19] More recently, there has been a sharp rise in unaccompanied minors at the Southern border of the United States. In fact, the Department of Homeland Security projects there will be 117,000 unaccompanied child migrants crossing the border in 2021, a large number of whom are teenagers.[20] In addition, increasing numbers of refugee students have been arriving from Afghanistan.

While some newcomer and refugee students come with high literacy skills and content knowledge, many arrive with limited or interrupted formal education and are described by researchers as Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFE). A recent study found that 11.4 percent of foreign-born 10th-grade students have experienced school interruptions upon arrival in the United States.[21] SLIFE students face huge challenges as they enter US schools with limited educational experiences and lower levels of literacy in their home languages. Not only are they met with the academic demands of secondary school while adjusting to a new language and culture, but some are also dealing with poverty, the stresses of family separation and/or reunification, and trauma due to violence suffered in their home country or during migration.[22] See Chapter Sixteen for a more detailed discussion on working with this group of students.

A larger group of secondary ELL students have been described by researchers as Long-Term English Language Learners, or LTELLs. These are ELL students who have attended school for six years or more but who continue to require language support services. The population of LTELLs in US schools has been steadily increasing and has been estimated to represent one quarter to one half of the total ELL population.[23] In California, the number of LTELLs grew from 62 percent of all secondary school ELLs in 2008 to 82 percent in 2016.[24] Typically, these students have high levels of oral English proficiency, but may lack the academic language and literacy skills needed to master subject matter. Many are "stuck" at the intermediate level of proficiency and face disproportionately high drop-out rates.[25] Many of these students may not have received targeted language development, may have been

placed with teachers lacking the professional development needed to meet specific language needs, and may have lived in particularly challenging socioeconomic conditions, including poverty.[26] See Chapter Eleven for more research and resources on LTELLs.

With such diversity among adolescent ELLs, it is important for teachers to learn as much as possible about their students and to have knowledge of strategies that directly address the needs of these students. Chapter Two contains ideas for getting to know students and for building relationships of trust with students and their families. It also outlines important resources for working with adolescent ELLs and gives ideas for establishing classroom routines that promote a positive learning environment. Chapters Three and Four present instructional strategies designed for newcomer and beginning students, and Chapters Five and Six offer numerous strategies designed for intermediate-level learners, including long-term ELLs.

While adolescent learners enter our classrooms with diverse needs and challenges, it is important to remember that they also possess creative minds capable of processing higher-order thinking and learning. The general public may often have the impression that language learning is easiest for young children and becomes harder and harder with age. However, recent research has shown that teens can learn a language as quickly as young children. One study found that the optimal window for language learning could be open a decade longer than previously thought—until the age of 17! [27]

A Primer on ELL Research

The following subsections present basic descriptions of research and concepts that are foundational components of ELL instruction. While this is not a comprehensive summary of all the research on language development, it is an introduction to several key concepts that are highly important for teachers of ELLs and can serve as launching points for further study.

L1 AND L2

Researchers and educators commonly use the term *L1* to refer to a student's home language (also called first language, native language, or heritage language) and *L2* to refer to the language a student is acquiring in addition to their home language, which in the United States is English. Children exposed to their first and second languages at the same time (usually prior to age three) are referred to as *simultaneous bilinguals*. Individuals who develop their second language after their first are known as *sequential bilinguals*. In general, if a child is exposed to their second language after the age of three, then they will become a sequential bilingual.[28]

The next subsection, on ELL best practices, will discuss the important link between L1 and L2 in language learning.

BICS AND CALP

Jim Cummins, a professor at the University of Toronto, first introduced the distinction between BICS (basic interpersonal communicative skills) and CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency).[29] His research has had a major impact on policy and practices in second language education. Figure 1.1 summarizes Cummins's distinctions.

More recent research has extended CALP to include the following three dimensions of academic English: linguistic (knowledge of word forms, functions, grammatical elements, and discourse patterns used in academic settings), cognitive (higher-order thinking involved in academic settings), and sociocultural-psychological (knowledge of social practices involved in academic settings).[30]

Instruction based on CALP is still widely accepted as best practice,[31] as many researchers agree upon the need to focus on academic language proficiency in order for ELLs to succeed in school.

ACQUISITION VERSUS LEARNING

Most researchers acknowledge a distinction between language acquisition and language learning. A simple explanation of the difference is that acquisition involves being able to easily use the language to communicate, while language learning might place more emphasis on filling out grammar worksheets correctly. This does not mean, however, that the two are mutually exclusive.

BICS	CALP
Listening and speaking skills that are acquired quickly in a new language in order to communicate in social situations	The academic language and more cognitively demanding skills required for academic success
Usually acquired within the first couple of years	Often takes longer to develop, between five and seven years, or longer for students with less proficiency in their home language
Context-embedded (meaning is accomplished with the assistance of contextual cues such as pictures, body language or intonation)	Context-reduced (meaning must be constructed without the benefit of contextual cues and literacy demands are high)
Example: Asking someone for directions or talking with friends on the soccer field	Example: Responding to an essay prompt or summarizing a chapter in a textbook

Figure 1.1.   BICS and CALP

From L. Ferlazzo and K. H. Sypnieski, *Navigating the Common Core with English Language Learners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), p. 6.

This distinction has led to much debate over the place of explicit grammar study in language development. Some linguists have argued for a more communicative approach, where the focus is on the message versus the form and fosters language acquisition, while others believe students need direct instruction in grammatical forms of the target language.[32]

Recent research has proposed a more balanced approach—that second language instruction can provide a combination of both *explicit* teaching focused on features of the second language such as grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, and *implicit* learning stemming from meaningful communication in the second language.[33] We agree that the best language instruction uses meaningful input and contexts to help students develop their English skills, but we also feel that teaching language features in context is also necessary for students to develop proficiency. Specific strategies for how to employ this kind of balanced approach in the classroom will be described in later chapters.

STAGES OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

While it is important to note that ELL students come with different cultural and educational experiences that can affect their language development, researchers, beginning with Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell,[34] have generally agreed on the following five stages of second language acquisition:

Preproduction. This phase is also called the "Silent or Receptive Stage" and is when the student is "taking in" the target language. The student may spend time learning vocabulary and may or may not practice pronouncing new words. The length of this phase is dependent on each individual learner and can last several hours or several months.

Early Production. In this phase, which may last about six months, the student begins to try speaking using words and short phrases, even though they may not be grammatically correct. A big focus is still on listening and absorbing the new language.

Speech Emergence or Production. By this stage, learners have typically acquired a few thousand words. Words and sentences are longer, but the student still relies heavily on context clues and familiar topics. This is an important stage where learners are developing greater comprehension and begin reading and writing in the new language.

Intermediate Fluency. In this stage, learners begin to communicate in complex sentences in speaking and writing. Learners also begin thinking in their second language which results in even more proficiency gains.

Advanced Fluency/Continued Language Development. As students reach advanced fluency they are able to communicate fluently and can maneuver successfully in new contexts and when exposed to new academic information. Learners need ongoing opportunities to further improve their accuracy and to maintain their fluency.

It is important to remember that not all students' experiences fall neatly into these categories, and that prior educational experiences, and literacy in their L1 can have a great impact on students' language acquisition processes. Researchers believe oral proficiency can take three to five years to develop and academic English proficiency can take four to seven years, or even longer for students with less proficiency in their first language.[35]

Knowing students' proficiency levels can help teachers differentiate their instruction and address the language needs of each student. For example, when working with students in preproduction and early production stages, it can be useful to ask yes-or-no questions. Students at the speech emergent level could be asked questions that require fairly short, literal answers, and students at the intermediate fluency stage could be asked if they agree or disagree with a statement and why.

ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY LEVELS

As described earlier, research has found that ELLs progress through several stages of language acquisition. These stages have traditionally been divided into five levels of English proficiency: Beginning, Early Intermediate, Intermediate, Early Advanced, and Advanced. Some states and organizations (like WIDA and ELPA21 which are consortiums comprised of states, territories and/or federal agencies) have developed their own terminology for these progressions. See Figure 1.2 for a chart illustrating how these different proficiency level labels correspond. Also, see the first chapter in our book *Navigating the Common Core with English Language Learners*[36] for an in-depth discussion on the various English Language Proficiency (ELP) Standards and ELP Assessments used nationwide.

Researchers have also discovered that students generally progress much more quickly from beginning to intermediate level (often taking two to three years) than from intermediate to advanced (often taking four or more years).[37] This is likely because the lower levels of proficiency require simpler vocabulary and sentence patterns and involve language situations that are highly contextualized (familiar, recurrent, and supported by nonlinguistic clues such as gestures and intonation). Full proficiency, on the other hand, means students must have command of more complex sentence structures and vocabulary. They must have the academic English to function well in less contextualized situations (for example, a classroom discussion or a prompted essay), where they must clearly communicate their ideas on higher-level, more abstract concepts.

Traditional Labels	Beginning	Early Intermediate	Intermediate	Early Advanced	Advanced	Proficient
WIDA	Entering	Emerging	Developing	Expanding	Bridging	Reaching
ELPA21	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Proficient
California	Emerging	→	Expanding	→	Bridging	Proficient/ Life Long Language Learning
New York	Entering	Emerging	Transitioning	Expanding	→	Commanding
Texas	Beginning	Intermediate	Advanced	→	Advanced High	→

Figure 1.2. English Proficiency Level "Labels"
Modified from L. Ferlazzo and K. H. Sypnieski, *Navigating the Common Core with English Language Learners* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), p. 7.

This research directly contradicts the argument that students who are immersed in all-English instruction will quickly become fluent, and it challenges the policies previously proposed and implemented in some states requiring students to move into mainstream classes after just one year of school.[38]

Of course, students' language acquisition often doesn't progress in a linear fashion within and across these proficiency levels. Students can demonstrate higher levels of proficiency in one domain versus another (e.g., speaking versus writing) and may even demonstrate different levels of proficiency within a domain, depending on the task.

It is also important to remember that a label of "Level 1" or "Beginner" doesn't identify the student's academic or social skills or potential, instead it only identifies what a student knows and can do at their current stage of English Language Development.

A Quick Tour of ELL Best Practices

The following are a few basic best practices in ELL instruction that will guide the strategies and activities presented in the following chapters. We have found that consistently using these practices makes our lessons more efficient and effective. We also feel it is important to include a few "worst" practices we have witnessed over the years in the hopes that they will not be repeated! The best practices outlined below, as well as others, will be explained in greater detail in subsequent chapters.

MODELING

Do model for students what they are expected to do or produce, especially for new skills or activities, by explaining and demonstrating the learning actions, sharing your thinking processes aloud and showing samples of

good teacher and student work. Modeling (or demonstrating) is one way for teachers to provide students with "critical input" in order to help students process content more "deeply and comprehensively."[39] Effective modeling should make the expectations of a task clear (without providing the "answer") and remain available for student access throughout the activity.[40]

Teacher modeling can take a variety of forms including providing sentence starters or frames to support discussion and writing tasks, completing the first example in a set of questions/problems, or demonstrating a learning process step-by-step while "thinking aloud" about what the teacher is doing and why.

Don't just tell students what to do and expect them to do it.

RATE OF SPEECH AND WAIT TIME

Do speak slowly and clearly and provide students with enough time to formulate their responses, whether in speaking or in writing. Remember—they are thinking and producing in two or more languages! After asking a question, wait for a few seconds before calling on someone to respond. This wait time provides all students with an opportunity to think and process, and gives ELLs an especially needed period to formulate a response.[41] Research shows incorporating three to five seconds of wait time increases student participation, improves the quality of student responses, and develops learning while boosting confidence.[42] In addition, providing a few seconds of wait time *after* a student responds and the teacher has acknowledged this response can allow for further elaboration from the student. This additional wait time also gives the rest of the students time to consider the responses and to formulate their own.

Don't speak too fast, and if a student tells you they didn't understand what you said, never, ever repeat the same thing in a louder voice!

USE OF NONLINGUISTIC CUES

Do use visuals (such as pictures), sketches, gestures, intonation, and other non-verbal cues to make both language and content more accessible to students. Teaching with visual representations of concepts can be hugely helpful to ELLs.[43] Specific suggestions are included throughout this book.

Don't stand in front of the class and lecture or rely on a textbook as your only visual aid.

GIVING INSTRUCTIONS

Do give verbal *and* written instructions—this practice can help all learners, especially ELLs. In addition, it is far easier for a teacher to point to the board in response to the inevitable repeated question, "What are we supposed to do?"[44]

Don't act surprised if students are lost when you haven't clearly written and explained step-by-step directions.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

Do regularly check that students are understanding the lesson. After an explanation or lesson, a teacher could say, "Please put thumbs up, thumbs down, or sideways to let me know if this is clear, *and it's perfectly fine if you don't understand or are unsure—I just need to know*." This last phrase is essential if you want students to respond honestly.

Teachers can also have students write answers to specific comprehension questions on a sticky note that they place on their desks or on mini-whiteboards. The teacher can then quickly circulate to check responses.

When teachers regularly check for understanding in the classroom, students become increasingly aware of monitoring their own understanding, which serves as a model of good study skills. It also helps ensure that students are learning, thinking, understanding, comprehending, and processing at high levels.[45]

Don't simply ask "Are there any questions?" This is not an effective way to gauge what all your students are thinking. Waiting until the end of class to see what people write in their learning log is not going to provide timely feedback. Also, don't assume that students are understanding because they are smiling and nodding their heads—sometimes they are just being polite!

ENCOURAGE DEVELOPMENT OF HOME LANGUAGE

Do encourage students to use their home language (L1) to support learning in your classroom. Research has found that learning to read in a home language can transfer to increased English acquisition. These transfers may include phonological awareness, comprehension skills, and background knowledge.[46]

Identify the home languages of your ELLs, make sure you have the appropriate bilingual dictionaries in your classroom, and allow students to access their smartphones to use for translation. Remember that validating