

Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

While this book will be useful to the ELL professional, it is meant for the general K-12 teacher who has encountered or may encounter English Language Learner students in the classroom. A chapter is included for each of the ten languages most spoken by students who do not also speak English, beginning with the most common language and proceeding to the least common one. Each chapter includes the following resources:

- *Country of Origin Information*—Use this country and culture information to connect with ELL students and to show your appreciation for and interest in students’ cultural backgrounds. Perhaps you will have a small celebration on an important holiday, or ask ELL students to share their traditions or religion with the rest of the class.
- *Useful Phrases*—Refer to these in basic communication with students and families. Included are words and phrases specifically useful in the school setting.
- *Student Dictionaries*—Use these reproducible picture dictionaries in the classroom, on the playground, and in content-area classes. You can copy and post these pages in your classroom to aid communication between your ELL students and the rest of the class. Encourage your English-speaking students as well as your ELL students to review these dictionaries.
- *Parent Letters*—It is likely that the parents of ELL students also speak little English, making the all-important communication with home difficult. Use these translated, reproducible parent letters to convey both caring and concern.

The reading tests included in Chapter 11 are *very* basic and do not replace the more detailed evaluations that will be administered by your district’s ELL services. However, until these services are put in place, these tests can give you a basic picture of a student’s reading skills (and prior schooling). Use them to determine if an ELL student struggles due to language unfamiliarity or to reading difficulties, and adjust your lessons and expectations accordingly.

With this book, the motivated mainstream teacher can open the channels of communication with English Language Learners and help these students feel like an appreciated part of your classroom and school community.

GENERAL TEACHING TIPS FOR USE WITH ELL STUDENTS

Respect Cultural Differences

The etiquette of communication and societal norms varies across cultures. Differences in appropriate eye contact, male/female relationships, and physical space can lead teachers to incorrectly interpret student behavior (Ortiz, 1995). Be aware of putting students in situations that are outside their cultural comfort zones but also be aware of the potential to stereotype your students based on cultural expectations. This, of course, is a fine line that you will need to tread with care. By learning as much as you can about an ELL student's background and culture, you can take steps toward creating a supportive and sensitive environment that is conducive to learning.

Below are some generalizations to keep in mind when exploring interactions with your new students:

- Many cultures see eye contact as aggressive or intimate (especially between the genders).
- Spanish-speaking, Arabic-speaking, and Asian students may be comfortable with less personal space and more physical contact than students (and teachers) experienced with American culture. Asian students, however, may be very uncomfortable being touched on the head.
- Korean families may place extreme importance on education and can become upset by the appearance of their child's underachievement.
- Parents of Asian students relate to teachers more formally than do their American counterparts.
- Spanish-speaking students might offer immediate respect for females in authority roles while withholding respect from female peers.
- Arabic-speaking students may have difficulties with females making decisions and exercising authority.
- Nodding and saying "yes" in Asian cultures demonstrates hearing but not necessarily agreement.
- Spanish-speaking students may prioritize family obligations over education.
- Copying schoolwork may be acceptable to students from former Eastern-bloc countries.
- Students from Asian countries might excel in memorization but have difficulties with reading comprehension.

Use Nonverbal Cues

When language fails, resort to strategies such as pictures, objects, demonstrations, gestures, and intonation cues (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2003). For example, you might point to the bookshelf when saying, “Please choose a book.” Be creative, kind, and persistent in getting your point across. Once a student has learned language basics, try to extend this language by using it in conjunction with nonverbal cues.

Encourage Partnering

If there are students who speak the same language as a new ELL student, consider asking the more fluent in English to help the less fluent. If your ELL student is the only speaker of his or her language, assign a responsible student to help the English learner navigate the lunchroom, the playground, the hallways, and so forth. Copy and distribute the picture dictionaries from this book to aid communication.

Use Student’s Native Language

Even if your only Spanish phrase is *Buenos días*, by starting your day with these words, you can immediately connect with your Spanish-speaking students (Flannery, 2006). In fact, one purpose of this book is to give teachers as many of these phrases for quick connection as possible.

Create a Visual Class Schedule

When an ELL student first arrives in your classroom, his or her first priority will be physically getting to the right places at the right times (Weaver, 2005). If you are an elementary school teacher, post a clear and concise daily schedule in your room, using pictures to describe the elements of the day. You might ask the ELL student to help you create this planner. If you are a single-subject teacher, consider creating a high-visual class schedule that ELL students can carry as they navigate their day.

Be Aware of Your Speaking Style

Avoid slang, incorrect usage, and difficult sentence constructions in your own speech. Whenever possible, strive for clear, concise phrases.

Modify Assignments

Your student struggling with language difficulties can be similar to other struggling students. Take care in modifying assignments so that they are not outside the abilities of your ELL students. Consider using hands-on learning, graphic organizers, cooperative learning, and discovery-based activities instead of textbook or lecture-format teaching.

For a more detailed look at instructional strategies for use with ELL students, consult one of the following in-depth guides:

- *Children With Limited English: Teaching Strategies for the Regular Classroom*. Ellen Kottler and Jeffrey A. Kottler. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2001.
- *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The SIOP Model*. Jana Echevarria, MaryEllen Vogt, and Deborah J. Short. Boston: Allyn & Bacon, 2003.
- *Fifty Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners*. Adrienne Harrell and Michael Jordan. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2003.

WORKING WITH TRANSLATIONS

The certified translation companies ASET Quality Translations and Transperfect Translations both worked to ensure accurate translation of the resources in this book. ASET provided the initial translations and Transperfect checked this work. Both companies have a long history of professional, native-language translators working with Fortune 500 companies, and the authors of this book found both companies to be well informed and experienced throughout the translation process.

However, inherent in this process is the possibility for stylistic differences that create very different translations, all of which are “right.” For example, a translation for a first grade class would read quite differently than a translation for a business professional. Thus, especially in the parent letters and reading tests, the goal of translation was not to reproduce the English word for word, but rather to convey the intended message in a culturally appropriate and idiomatic manner. Your students, their families, or bilingual members of your staff might find places in these translations in which the tone or the content are different than the included English. In each case this is a conscious choice on the part of the authors and the translators.

As you will notice, the majority of these languages are written using non-English alphabets. If you are working with ELL students who read in their native languages, you can converse by pointing to the phrases you wish to communicate. If your students do not read in any language, use the included English transliterations and pronunciation guides to make your best attempt at speaking.

However, as you might have guessed, the pronunciation guides will not immediately make you bilingual. This is especially true when working with tonal languages, such as Vietnamese, Cantonese, Navajo, and Hmong, in which slight pitch variations affect meaning. In fact, due to the difficulty of pronouncing tonal languages the authors of this book debated removing the pronunciation guides from these chapters. The rationale for including these resources is twofold—first, in the process of integrating a student into your school community, your attempt at communication using a student’s language can be as empowering as your actual success

with the language, and second, with your ELL student's help you may, in fact, learn to speak a few of these words or phrases in an intelligible way. Again, this book offers the starting point for basic communication, and even in these tonal languages, this book offers the opportunity to use a combination of speaking, pictures, and gestures to get your point across.