

## **Understanding English Language Learners: Challenges and Promises**

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Current and future teachers and school administrators are being faced with a challenge that is not likely to change in the near future. The number of students entering public school classrooms in the United States speaking a first language other than English is on the increase. Many large urban school districts are challenged with the many different languages spoken by their students and families (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2000). Suburban and rural schools are also experiencing an increase of students speaking English as a second language (ESL). In the United States between 1986 and 1998, the number of children with limited English proficiency rose from 1.6 million to 9.9 million. It is estimated that by the year 2050, the percentage of children in the United States who arrive at school speaking a language other than English will reach 40% (Lindholm-Leary, 2000). The impacts of these demographic changes are challenging educators and administrators to provide academically appropriate and challenging instruction for all English Language Learners (ELLs). Many of these students may come from backgrounds of poverty which impact their educational quality and attendance and also may have parents with low levels of education (Espinoza-Herold, 2003). The

schools they attend may be dealing with limited resources and have insufficient numbers of certified teachers, who would have the knowledge of how to best educate ELLs. The reality is that many teachers do not have specialized training on best instructional practices as it relates to cultural diversity or culturally responsive instruction. Gay (2000) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, and performance styles of diverse students to make learning more appropriate and effective for them. It emphasizes the strengths of students. Culturally Responsive Teaching is a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning (Ladson-Billings, 1994). The purpose of this article is to briefly address the challenges of educating English language learners (ELLs), shed light on the confusion many educators have between bilingual and ESL programs in regard to the programs' roles and functions, provide research regarding learning a second language, and provide practical and effective instructional strategies that will be helpful for current and future teachers and administrators challenged to provide quality educational programs for ELLs.

Although studies in the past have recommended that students be instructed or supported in their first language and given five to seven years to become academically prepared, the reality is that ELLs are typically expected to learn English in a couple of years to a level of being able to take and successfully pass standardized and state-mandated tests (Collier, 1987; Cummins, 1981; Krashen, 1981). When ELLs are given some type of English assistance and then are not able to attain the academic expectations, the program, teacher and/or the student are labeled unsuccessful. The inability to

instruct ELL students with successful outcomes is a frustration voiced by many educators today when challenged to work with them (Ovando & Collier, 1998). These educators express frustration and feel their prior university coursework has not prepared them sufficiently for working with culturally diverse populations and their families, as well as in the instructional realm (McCandless, Rossi, & Daugherty, 1996). Therefore, many hit-and-miss instructional strategies in experimental mode are used everyday by educators across America in classrooms with ELLs in the hope that one or two strategies will work.

Understanding the language acquisition process and development, and research-proven instructional strategies for working with ELLs is essential for successful teaching and learning. If teachers really want to be successful and effective, literacy instruction for ELLs should be very deliberate, organized, and strategic, so that they learn the language system while learning to read and write in English. The educator should view the student's knowledge of another language as a valuable asset and not as a liability to becoming literate in English (Baker, 1996; Samway & McKeon, 1999). The instructional *modus operandi* should not be mediocre or compensatory. For ELLs, it is important to build on first-language competencies rather than to assume that ELLs have few language strengths requiring a remedial approach for learning (Freeman & Freeman, 1993). For many ELLs at the elementary level, two language programs may be available, Bilingual Education (BE) and ESL. Some schools refer to their ESL program as English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Many educators confuse the function and purpose of these two

programs. How are they alike? How are they different? Both programs are used to educate ELLs.

### **Bilingual education programs**

Bilingual programs use *two* languages for instructional purposes, the student's first language and English. The first language used in bilingual programs is usually dependent on the geographical location of students and their families. For example in the south, especially in Texas, most bilingual education programs use Spanish and English. While there are different types of bilingual education models, many school districts tend to implement a transitional model that offers first language (L1) support but whose ultimate goal is for students to learn English as a second language (L2). In other words, maintaining the student's first language is not the goal of a transitional bilingual program (Ovando & Collier, 1998). Students are given initial language support in order to learn English. Most bilingual programs can be found at the lower grade levels from prekindergarten up to third or fourth grade. If ELLs have been in a bilingual program since prekindergarten, they are usually expected to exit or transition into a "regular" English-speaking classroom by third or fourth grade (Crawford, 1991). The bilingual education teachers are expected to be literate and proficient in the first and second language (English) of the students. Therefore, bilingual teachers attain their teaching credentials similar to "regular" or generalist teachers, but they are required to demonstrate proficiency in the other language of the bilingual program and to take classes that will prepare them to work with ELLs. It is believed students in bilingual education

classes will not fall behind in their studies due to instruction in their first language. In other words, instructional time is not lost due to the students' inability to understand or speak English. Since the transitional model of bilingual education emphasizes English proficiency, ESL strategies are used by the bilingual teacher. The teacher's instruction is only in English during the ESL portion of class time. The teacher uses many different types of strategies such as visuals and oral language to facilitate the learning of English (Ovando & Collier, 1998).

Characteristics of effective biliteracy programs include a strong academic curriculum in bilingual education; well defined instructional plans and strategies to teach reading and writing; strong administrative support; strong support for first-language instruction as a bridge to learning English; strong language and reading transfer strategies; and the belief that literacy is a vital skill that enables individuals to function in society (August & Hakuta, 1997). Effective biliteracy programs also emphasize reading, writing, oral, and listening comprehension with the conviction that listening and speaking a language cannot be separated from the process of learning decoding and written communication skills in the first and second languages (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996; Tinajero & Devillar, 2000).

With all the promises of well-implemented bilingual programs and their benefits to ELLs, the programs are not without their critics ranging from misunderstandings and personal attitudes to political views of language. There are many misunderstandings about the functions and goals of bilingual programs by teachers, administrators, and even parents. Therefore, many generalist teachers, colleagues of bilingual educators, and administrators do

not understand the instructional set-up or curriculum of bilingual classrooms (Samway & McKeon, 1999). Many administrators find themselves overseeing bilingual programs they do not personally understand or agree with philosophically. Without a firm foundation of knowledge and research about the functions and purposes of a well-implemented bilingual education program by both teachers and administrators, the parents of ELLs find themselves confused about the appropriate educational placement for their children when English is not the student's first language or even a language spoken at home (Robles-Goodwin, Mohr, Wilhelm, & Contreras, 2005). With that reality, many parents choose to waive the right to enroll their children in bilingual programs because of the misunderstandings they have about the program (Robles-Goodwin, 2004). Usually there is not a professional educator on staff to present the options and benefits of bilingual education. In fact, when you ask most parents why they chose for their child not to be in a bilingual program, they say "because I want my child to learn English" or "I do not want my child to be in a remedial program." Both of these responses indicate their misunderstandings about a program that should not be compensatory or delay the acquisition of English (Robles-Goodwin, 2004). With this scenario, most of the ELLs that could be best served in a bilingual program will be found in "regular" classrooms, not bilingual classes. The sink-or-swim analogy is often used to describe bilingual children in mainstream classrooms because many of them "swim" and stay afloat with their studies without first language support found in bilingual programs, but many more have sunk because they could not survive (Rodríguez, Ramos, & Ruiz-Escalante, 1994). They usually continue to fall



behind in their studies until many reach a point in which they may choose to drop out of school because they can see no way of ever catching up with their peers. Even though ELLs make some progress, they are still lagging behind the mainstream students who also made progress during the year (Samway & McKeon, 1999; Ovando & Collier, 1998).

### **English as a second language programs**

In many cases, ELLs in U. S. school districts are assigned to school-wide ESL teachers who typically pull students out of regular classroom instruction for short periods of time with the goal of developing their language proficiencies in English. The ESL instructional time is often focused on teaching simple, repetitive, low-level, and drill-like English skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing at the student's English proficiency level of beginner, intermediate or advanced (Ovando & Collier, 1998). However, if the ESL teacher does not have a strong background in reading, the reciprocity of reading and writing at high levels can be nominal to nonexistent, with most of the short instructional time being devoted to basic listening and speaking activities and transitional activities (Gibbons, 2002). Although the intent of the ESL instruction is to help students become competent in the English language, the removal from the regular classroom during critical literacy times such as language arts can usually do more harm than good in the long run. In fact, many ESL students are pulled into a class where lower-level cognitive functions are emphasized as opposed to being challenged to think critically at high levels. If this configuration is used, the ELLs may be better

served by remaining in the mainstream classroom during language arts (Slavin & Calderon, 2001).

Many educators and administrators believe that students just simply need to learn to speak English. However, there are many English-speaking students that are not academically successful, even though they speak English. To illustrate this point, I once had a very bright student, "Charlie," in my bilingual kindergarten classroom that came to school speaking only Spanish. That year I was fortunate enough to have a piano in my classroom. Since I played a little, I used the piano and music to teach my children English. We would sing songs in Spanish initially and then in English. Charlie loved music and learned a lot of English words through listening and singing. Many times, he would hear a song in English and memorize it, without really understanding all the English words. Since he was fascinated with dinosaurs, he memorized the English words to some dinosaur songs. He would sing, "My name is Stegosaurus. I am a funny looking dinosaur. On my back are many bony plates and on my tail there is more. . ." He listened to these songs many times over and over again in the listening center until he memorized all the words and could sing it in "perfect English." One afternoon while my students were in learning centers, my principal and an area superintendent stopped by unexpectedly to visit my classroom. They wanted to see how the students were coming along with their English development. They stated they did not want to disturb my afternoon routine, and that I should continue as usual. The superintendent walked to the science center where Charlie was making dinosaurs using modeling clay and placing them in their natural habitats. She approached Charlie and said, "Hi." Charlie looked up and said,



"Hi!" "How are you?" asked the superintendent. "I am fine. Thank you. How are you?" responded Charlie. This greeting was a routine or drill we had practiced in English since the beginning of school and what is referred to as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) or survival English. She looked impressed at his remarkable progress in English in such a short time. She then pointed to one of his dinosaurs and asked, "Who is that?" Charlie responded, "A dinosaur." She asked, "What is its name?" As I nervously observed their interaction, I was amazed when Charlie confidently looked up at her and responded, "My name is Stegosaurus. I am a funny looking dinosaur. For on my back are many bony plates and on my tail there is more. . ." He went on until he had recited the entire song using dinosaur facts! Now, I did not tell her what Charlie had just done—memorized a song—especially when she looked at me with an expression of amazement as to my "gift" of teaching English to Spanish-speaking children. I just returned her smile. Now, I could have had another experience if the superintendent had asked Charlie a series of high-level questions such as: If you could be any dinosaur, which one would you choose? Why? These types of questions require a student to reflect critically on the questions and to respond accordingly by using appropriate English vocabulary. However, she had only asked Charlie basic low-level language questions that merely required basic knowledge and memory of English proficiency in listening and speaking. Charlie's basic English knowledge does not ensure his academic success. It is a myth to believe that ELLs only need to learn to speak English to be successful (Samway & McKeon, 1999). After all, there are many students who speak only English and may be failing academically.

The challenge is to balance language learning, literacy, and high levels of critical thinking. Without deliberate and strategic support, many ESL teachers are expected to perform linguistic and literacy miracles in the short ESL instructional times that usually range from 45 minutes to an hour daily. With this instructional pull out approach, many regular classroom teachers do not see themselves as primarily responsible for the academic progress of ELLs, especially since ELLs are pulled out of their classes for ESL instruction. As a result, teachers lower their expectations for student achievement because they begin to think that it is someone else's job to teach "these" students (Mohr, 2004).

### **English language acquisition and development**

Many preservice, beginning, and current teachers and administrators who have not had specialized training for working with diverse cultures or with ELLs, have many questions about what to expect linguistically when they have students in their class who do not speak English and about best educational practices for serving them (Ladson-Billings, 2001). It is important to sort out the myths and realities of language learning as it relates to students learning English as a second language. A teacher's perceptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes about language learning influences students' successes or failures in school. First, learning a second language takes time. Cummins (1981) states it takes approximately 2 to 3 years to learn basic English and approximately 5 to 7 years to learn high-level academic language needed to pass state-level or standardized tests. Many teachers and administrators erroneously believe that "just learning to speak English" at its basic level is

sufficient for academic success or placing an ELL in a classroom without any first-language support. When working with young children, it is important to recognize that not only are they learning English, but they are also learning their own first language. Therefore, bilingual teachers will use the Spanish language for the purposes of teaching English (Freeman & Freeman, 1996), and ESL teachers will use many visuals to teach vocabulary. ELL teachers use the known (student's first language) to teach the unknown (English). While many teachers may not agree with this framework, it can be looked at from a different perspective. For example, if a teacher speaking only English wanted to learn to speak Chinese, she could learn Chinese more quickly and efficiently if it is learned through English instead of being totally immersed in a Chinese class with the teacher only speaking Chinese day after day. When learning and using two languages simultaneously, young children may use both languages and code-switch when speaking. When this occurs, they may mix their first and second language within a sentence such as: "Voy a ir a la store when I get home." (I am going to the store when I get home). This example illustrates the processing of two languages at the same time. It should be noted that this process is done automatically or without much thought (Baker, 1996). Many teachers would often believe that a student observed to code-switch was evidence of a lack of command of either language. This linguistic occurrence has now been identified as a high level cognitive function many ELLs use in their thinking and speaking (Berzins & Lopez, 2001).

Many teachers believe young children learn a second language faster than older learners. In reality, while young language learners may learn to speak a new language with little or no accent, older

language learners are often more efficient learners because they usually already have a language framework from which to build a new language. They are able to transfer existing knowledge in one language to another one. In other words, an older student may already know how to add and subtract in their language (Ovando & Collier, 1998; Samway & McKeon, 1999). Therefore, for students learning English as a second language, the teacher does not have to “start from the beginning linguistically” and reteach the skills of adding and subtracting. The teacher only needs to teach the English vocabulary words associated with the skills.

Therefore, some myths that need to be debunked in terms of learning English are:

- Learning to speak English is a fast process. In fact, it is not. Learning English *takes time*.

- Speaking the first language at home will delay the learning of English at school. In fact, students speaking their first language at home *will not confuse or slow down* the English language learning process.

- Learning English needs to occur from the “beginning” no matter what is known in the first language. In fact, older learners *will transfer* their knowledge in their first language to English. The learner *does not have to start from the beginning* to learn English.

- Acquiring English follows a different pattern from that used to learn the first language. In fact, *it follows a similar pattern*. It goes through developmental stages much like first language

patterns (Krashen, 1999; Samway & McKeon, 1999).

Teachers may ask themselves: What should I expect from students learning English? As stated before, learning English takes much time and practice. Many teachers of ELLs may not have the same high expectations for ELLs. Teachers with good intentions can operate from two perspectives when working with ELLs that do not speak or participate in English. One stance is that ELLs who do not speak English at home do not need to have good self-esteem at school while learning English. Another view is what Berzins and Lopez (2001) describe as the "pobrecito" (poor little one) framework of teachers making excuses for why the student cannot learn. While both of these approaches would seemingly appear to reflect an appropriate and culturally responsive approach to working with ELLs, it demonstrates a mindset of not expecting much from the ELL student and delivering academically inferior instruction (Ladson-Billings, 2001). A student may go through a "silent period" in which they may not say a word. During this time, it is important for teachers to allow ample wait time for students to process information in two languages (Samway & McKeon, 1999). Sufficient wait time of 4-7 seconds should be given when asking ELLs to respond to a verbal question. If a student does not respond after the wait time, the teacher can ask the student to continue thinking about the response and that she will get back with them. This practice signals to the student that the teacher understands the language acquisition process and has high expectations for all students (Diaz & Flores, 2001). The silent period can last as long as six months for some students. During this time, their reading and writing skills may develop before the speaking skills. The

teacher should expect for the learning to transfer from the first language to English (Krashen, 1987; Tabors, 1997). As students learn English, they will process through two stages of language learning. Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) sometimes referred to as “social or playground” language takes usually 2-3 years to develop. Advanced language levels referred to as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) takes approximately 5 to 7 years to develop (Cummins, 1981). This high level of language development is needed for students to think creatively and abstractly about language. Teachers of ELLs need to keep in mind the students need advanced language levels to do well on achievement tests.

### **What are some best practices for ELLs?**

What should teachers do if they have ELLs in their classes?

- *Teachers should speak slowly and clearly—simplify language.* Some teachers talk loudly when students appear not to understand. However, speaking loudly will not help them understand any better.

- *Teachers may need to repeat or paraphrase directions several times or even model with actions.* Effective teachers make students feel comfortable learning English. They lower the student's affective filter or learning frustrations when learning a new language.

- *The teachers should create an environment in which students feel safe to take linguistic risks.*



- Most importantly, *teachers must always have high expectations for learning by providing many different types of learning experiences with appropriate support* (Diaz & Flores, 2001).

- They need to make learning understandable, which is often referred to as comprehensible input (CI). *They make learning meaningful by validating the language, culture and experiences the students bring to school and incorporate them into the curriculum.*

Effective teachers use literature and a variety of books to provide CI and to depict aspects of the student's culture (Krashen, 1987). Books provide a platform for developing many different aspects of literacy. Big books and reading aloud can provide opportunities to engage students in a motivating way (Herrell, 2000). Books can be used to present informational and appropriate vocabulary for a variety of interests and themes. They can be used to expose ELLs to the English language structures, patterns, and discourse. The read alouds can be expanded to motivate students, especially bilingual students, to join their voices to put on play, choral reading, and recitation of a favorite poem/song/game:

### *Los elefantes (Spanish)*

*Un elefante se balanceaba  
sobre la tela de una araña.  
Como veía que resistía.  
Fue a llamar a otro elefante.*

*Dos elefantes. . .*

### *The Elephant Song*

One elephant went out to play  
Out on a spider's web one day.  
He had such enormous fun.  
He called another elephant to  
play.

Two elephants. . .

*Tres elefantes. . .*

Three elephants. . .

This counting song can be played as a game. While the group stands in a circle and sing, one child makes the slow-motion sway walk of an elephant inside the circle. At the end of the first verse, the child picks a second child, and both do the slow motion elephant sway walk, and so on (Orozco, 1994). There are many variations of this song throughout Latin America.

Readers' theatre is usually characterized by the transformation of a story into a play. Writing the scripts involves many literacy processes and negotiations among students about their interpretations of the text. These conversations occur in social interactions as students read various texts and discuss the roles of the presentation in terms of what parts should be added, deleted, or refined for the performance. These types of activities demonstrate engaging and motivational contexts that are particularly appropriate for students learning English. McCauley and McCauley (1992) found that the repeated reading of text through choral reading allowed ELLs to use English in a no-risk environment, allowing them to mispronounce English words that could easily be absorbed by the overriding voices of the group. ELLs can usually understand more language than they can produce. By understanding the Vygotskian concept of language mediating thinking, teachers should include a variety of cognitive activities such as problem-solving; creating; reasoning; recognizing similarities and differences; understanding relationships; sorting sounds, letters, words, and ideas into categories or groups; recalling events, ideas; and using language to

speak, write, and read with appropriate language scaffolding (Gibbons, 2002).

Language and literacy activities for ELLs should include but not be limited to interactive journal writing, letter writing/pen pals, Drop Everything and Read (D.E.A.R) time, language experiences, storytelling and retelling, daily news, writing text for wordless picture books, reading predictable books, shared reading, story listening, poetry, songs, chants, message boards, music, art, drama, and Reader's Theater (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). Some poetry books include *A light in the attic* (Silverstein, 1981), *Falling up* (Silverstein, 1996), *A pizza the size of the sun* (Prelutsky, 1996), and *Something big has been here* (Prelutsky, 1990). Some books that have a repeated pattern of some type that can be used include *Mary wore her red dress and Henry wore his green sneakers* (Peek, 1985) and *Brown bear, Brown bear*, (Martin, 1967). For familiar cultural sequences such as cardinal and ordinal numbers, *Feast for Ten* (Falwell, 1993), *Just a minute* (Morales, 2003), and *Chicken soup with rice* (Sendak, 1962) are good resources.

Building English vocabulary is an important ingredient in learning to read fluently and in being able to learn and understand complex concepts. Large vocabulary knowledge facilitates reading comprehension and makes learning to read new ideas and concepts possible (Meire, 2004).

There should be daily activities that strengthen ELLs' cognitive development because it is closely tied to the development of language and literacy (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998). Some literacy examples include:

- developing problem-solving skills and creativity;

- building skills that help them recognize differences and similarities;
- helping them see relationships between and among ideas, words, and objects;
- building their memory and recall for events, people and ideas; and
- developing the ability to sequence ideas and events.

Higher order mental tasks, the ability to reason, and abstract reasoning require intensive and deliberate instruction. There should be a variety of language and literacy activities that lay the foundations needed to be a successful reader and writer (Meier, 2004).

Heath (1989) stated, “. . . for all children, academic success depends less on the specific language they speak than on the ways of using the language they know” (p. 144). Clay (1993) believed that the least complicated entry to literacy was to use the language the children already know and speak because it can be used to power their literacy learning.

Successful reading strategies research has shown that reading comprehension is a constructive process where students construct meaning by interacting with the text. The interaction involves the student's prior knowledge, the text, and the reading context (Cooper, 2003; Herrell, 2000). Expert readers have strategies or plans to help them solve problems and construct meaning before, during, and after reading. Successful reading transfer strategies include constructing meaning by helping students visualize or making pictures in their heads as they read. This strategy is sometimes referred to as mental imaging, which enhances understanding (Cooper, 2003).

Language and literacy should occur all day long. Teachers are encouraged to read aloud to ELLs for 20-30 minutes per day, in an interactive way. This sharing is an avenue for building the many language and reading foundations needed to accelerate English language skills. These activities provide perfect opportunities to expand cognitive, language, and memory skills (Opitz & Rasinski, 1998).

### **How can I work with the families of my ELLs?**

- Schedule regular meetings with parents in which language and literacy development are discussed.
- Be flexible with the place and time of the meetings in order to accommodate working parents, transportation issues, and childcare.
- If feasible, make certain to provide an interpreter for the meeting.
- Include provisions for childcare in case children are brought to the meeting.
- Have informal conversations with parents in order to learn about their children from their point of view. They can contribute valuable information regarding their children's strengths and unique needs.
- There are many benefits to having the teacher make home visits to learn more about the family and the home environment of students.

The teacher can use the experience to prepare and provide a culturally responsive curriculum structure at school (Hildebrand, Phenice, Gray, & Hines, 2000). For example, I once had an ELL I

felt was not “with it.” As a teacher, it annoyed me when students seemed irresponsible when it came to school and learning. He would often fall asleep during the day. I scheduled a home visit and was surprised to discover multiple families living in a small apartment. The adults living in the apartment had different working schedules ranging from morning to night. As a result, this student experienced many challenges at home from a student perspective. He did not have a quiet place to do his homework other than a small area in a closet. The television was on all day and night, and he did not have a regular bedtime schedule allowing him to sleep in a noiseless environment. After my home visit, I was more compassionate about the daily struggles usually taken for granted by many middle-class values and experiences. As a result, I made instructional adjustments that allowed the student to begin his homework at school.

Many cultures value and respect the role of teachers; therefore, many parents will not dispute or disagree with a teacher's recommendation regarding how best to help their children learn English (Robles-Goodwin, 2004). Many teachers often ill advise parents with limited English levels to only speak English at home with their children. If this is the case, ELLs will only be exposed to fragmented English at home. While teachers may believe this recommendation to parents will help ELLs learn English rapidly, it has very harmful effects. Since most young ELLs are learning their own language, as well as learning English at school, parents should be encouraged to speak their first or “better” language with their children. Otherwise, ELLs may only develop minimal literacy skills in their first language and English.



### **What's next? The promises for the future**

Accelerating the English proficiency of ELLs is a multifaceted effort by many people including educators, administrators, and parents. Making appropriate decisions regarding the best educational practices and programs to implement necessitates knowing how ELLs acquire English and the challenges involved. Teachers must use proven best instructional strategies to teach ELLs in engaging and meaningful ways. ESL instruction needs to include a combination of best practices that utilize proven research-based literacy strategies (McGee & Richgels, 1996). The mainstream and ESL teacher are encouraged to accept responsibility for ELLs and to work together to make appropriate teaching modifications that include explicit teaching of the English language system, increase vocabulary knowledge, and make meaningful connections to real-life situations. To reiterate some strategies for working with ELLs:

#### *Simplify your language.*

- Avoid slang expressions.
- Rephrase instead of repeating.
- Speak in a normal tone.

#### *Demonstrate and use manipulatives*

- Use gestures and facial expressions.
- Use pictures and real objects to teach vocabulary.

#### *Adapt instruction*

- Use pictures, charts, time lines, and diagrams.
- Make information comprehensible and meaningful (relevant to the culture).

*Group students*

- Use cooperative grouping for peer interaction and language development.
- Group students according to their language level for attaining higher language levels among the group.

*Increase wait time*

- Allow students time to process information for answering questions in English.

**Implications**

Educators must have high educational expectations for all ELLs. After all, efforts must be doubled or even tripled to serve the students who need them the most. Students excel when learning in an enriched environment where they have choices for the way they demonstrate mastery. Effective instruction should be designed to appeal to the variety of diverse learners prevalent in today's classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2001). ELLs deserve to have teachers and systems willing to go beyond using traditional practices and beliefs and strive to implement culturally responsive instruction in a respectful way in order to fulfill the promises of an equitable education to our future generations.

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