

2016 Educator Effectiveness Webinar Series
Lesson Development for English Learners in Content Area Settings: Key Considerations
Q&A with Sarah Catherine K. Moore, Ph.D.
June 23, 2016

In this webinar, Dr. Sarah Catherine K. Moore, Program Director at the Center for Applied Linguistics, outlined factors for content area teachers to consider as they design and deliver lessons for mainstream classrooms that include EL students. This Q&A addressed the questions participants had for Dr. Moore following the webinar. The [webinar recording](#) and [presentation slides](#) are also available.

Questions

1. What are the most high-impact best practices to start training teachers on when dealing with ELL for the first time?

Dr. Moore explains how there is not one most high-impact best practice to start training teachers on dealing with ELL for the first time; however, she states how it is essential that educators and district officials investigate the demographics of English learners (ELs) in their schools, districts, and communities. This will allow for educators to learn whether or not there is a shared language background or if students are from a shared refugee background. Dr. Moore also recommends further investigating the policies, supports, and programs available for ELs, such as a Newcomer Center and locations where teachers would find translation support.

2. How are teacher education programs incorporating ELL issues in secondary education programs?

Teacher education programs incorporating ELL issues in secondary education programs varies widely by state and is inconsistently implemented. In the beginning of her presentation, Dr. Moore explained the varying percentages of ELs by state, and how this affects the prevalence and quality of teacher education programs nationally. Unfortunately, she reports that only 12.5% of teachers of education reported more than eight hours of professional development regarding instructional methods of ELs. Dr. Moore also described the Center for Applied Linguistics (CAL)'s research program, Education Connects, which is a teacher professional development program focusing on planning lessons for ELs aligned with Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The program also provides lesson plan templates (LPTs).

3. How do we help content teachers approach lesson planning for ELs in a manner that they can manage?

Dr. Moore explains how teachers generally feel under-prepared to teach ELs and particularly unready to implement college- and career-readiness standards for these students. Because ELs need access to both grade-level content and opportunities for English language development, she explains why it is beneficial for sheltered instruction to be used as an approach to support ELs in content area classrooms. Dr. Moore describes some key considerations for content teachers approaching lessons planning: practicing both oral and written language to develop content knowledge, contextualizing content as well as language and literacy practices, covering vocabulary for content concept representation in terms of developing understanding and communicating comprehension, and incorporating the students' native languages in the classroom by scaffolding.

4. What are some strategies for content area buy-in? How do we not ignore teachers' needs and have them truly become a stakeholder without feeling like it's an addition to their already overwhelmed educational plates?

In order for teachers to adequately instruct English learners, they need to have the necessary tools for working with English learners. In turn, Dr. Moore explains how it is critically important that practitioners and stakeholders adequately regard the complexity of language acquisition in the context of content learning; one way this can be accomplished is through ensuring that all teachers, especially content area teachers, have access to resources on how to work with ELs.

5. How are you defining ELL?

According to Dr. Moore, English Language Learners are defined as students who have been identified as "Limited English Proficient" on state-based proficiency assessments. And according to the Census Bureau, "Limited English Proficient" refers to persons ages five and older who reported speaking English "not at all," "not well," or "well" on their survey questionnaire.

6. How do you prioritize the needs of an English Language Learner who has been identified as having exceptional learning needs with the needs for English language acquisition?

Dr. Moore explained dually identified English learners as students who have been placed in special education settings and whose English proficiency scores have resulted in identification as ELs. She discusses Response to Intervention as an important first step, as well as being able to distinguish behaviors between learning disabilities and English language proficiency since there is an overrepresentation of ELs in special education settings due to inability to understand the difference. Dr. Moore presents a list of behaviors associated with learning disabilities and acquiring a second language, and explains how to recognize and prioritize these students' needs.

7. What are some strategies to support EL students in math?

For all content areas, Dr. Moore suggests encouraging students to use dictionaries, as they can be based on templates provided by the teacher and completed by students or developed by the teacher, or in small groups can be especially valuable in settings with highly content-related knowledge, such as science and math.

8. Can you provide information on supporting SLIFE/newcomer students?

SLIFE students are Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education. Dr. Moore explains that SLIFE students have also been referred to as those with limited formal schooling, newcomer students, and Students with Interrupted or Inadequate Education (SIFE). She discusses the Mutually Adaptive Learning Paradigm and encourages educators and school officials to learn about the culturally adaptive learning model, which calls on groups to accommodate the key learning priorities of both groups (teachers and students) to establish and maintain ongoing two-way communication, identify priorities in both cultures and accommodate where possible, and build associations between the familiar and unfamiliar when accommodation is not feasible and new priorities must be established. Dr. Moore also stresses the importance of teachers having the ability to perform various academic tasks and foster shared responsibility, oral transmission, and individual accountability. She also suggests districts having Newcomer Centers as further support for newcomer students.

9. How can student-centered, inquiry-based strategies be used with entering (basic) ELLs?

Throughout her presentation, Dr. Moore provides strategies for educators to implement in the classroom to ease the transition and support ELs. She provides three instructional practices including interaction, which involves think-pair-share, circle chats, and Generating Interactions between Schemata and Text (GIST); contextualizing, which includes elaborating rather than simplifying (text charting), using past experiences (predicting), and connecting experiences to text (double-entry journals); and key vocabulary, involving integrating key vocabulary instruction by providing dictionaries, restating or paraphrasing in-text vocabulary, and explicitly teaching root words and affixes. To implement the strategies mentioned, Dr. Moore suggests using CAL's Education Connections Lesson Plan Templates (LPTs) which include scaffolding strategies to ensure ELs understand the lesson.

10. Is this webinar for ELL or mainstream teachers?

The webinar was mostly for educators of EL students, but also for mainstream teachers who may have EL students in their classrooms.

11. Elementary school teachers seem to work with content rather seamlessly. Regarding organization for middle and high school teachers, how can they organize their small block of time to implement strategic instruction?

Dr. Moore explains that strategic instruction can be implemented for middle and high school teachers in the same ways that they are applied at other grade levels. She described these instructional strategies throughout her presentation.

12. Can these lessons be used for low learners as well?

Dr. Moore explains that as lessons are scaffolded for ELs, they can be scaffolded for ELs that are also low learners. However, educators must first understand how to distinguish ELs from low learners, as they display similar actions; only after this understanding, can the appropriate strategies be implemented for these low learners in similar and varying ways than they are for ELs.

13. What are some ELL Reading strategies in high school English?

Dr. Moore stresses the idea regarding students needing to use language in order to learn language and how it is essential for educators to provide opportunities to use all four language domains: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. She states how students should have access to complex texts, and how scaffolding the language used in these texts helps students gain access. Texts should represent different cultural backgrounds and dialects of English which can also help ELs feel more engaged and represented within a classroom that may not include many EL students. Particularly in high school, Dr. Moore recommends having students summarize or respond to a reading passage in their first language and involving a bilingual colleague or student to help translate key information; having a bilingual dictionary on hand is also necessary to help increase reading skills and a repertoire of key vocabulary. GIST also provides opportunities for students to discuss and clarify meanings as well as text charting or predicting, in terms of reading comprehension.

14. What are best practices for teaching ELA students in core classes?

It is important to focus on academic language when planning lessons. Teaching key vocabulary related to core content areas is vital to students' English language development and understanding of core content. However, language is not limited to key vocabulary (Ellis, 1997). It is also beneficial to identify the language forms critical to each content area. For example, in science, turning verbs into nouns (nominalization) allows students to discuss scientific processes (e.g. "react" to "reaction"). Keeping these specific language forms in mind when teaching core content areas can provide a starting point for scaffolding and teaching this language within content-area instruction. Teachers can encourage acquisition of these language skills by employing practices that encourage students to engage in all four language domains (reading, writing, speaking, and listening).

15. What is the best strategy to teach ESL students?

Current theory informs us of the importance of providing EL students with opportunities to use and practice language. Dr. Moore stressed the importance of providing opportunities for students to use all four language domains in the classroom (reading, writing, speaking, and listening) and providing opportunities for student interaction. It is also important to incorporate students' first languages as a resource in the classroom. Language is used in particular settings and for particular purposes, so identify the language that students will need in certain content areas in order to participate in class activities. It is also important to consider students' identities and backgrounds, and make connections between the content and students' personal lives. Second generation students who maintain connections to their home culture and who speak their home culture's language perform better academically and show more pro-social behaviors in school.

16. What is the role of formative assessment?

Formative assessment for ELs mostly involves English language proficiency development. Dr. Moore once again stresses the critical role and function of vocabulary for ELs' success in the classroom and how vocabulary is not only helpful for students to understand the content, but also for their capacity to convey their comprehension whether it be in discussions or for formative assessments.

17. How can we better assess ELL students?

Dr. Moore suggests that in order to address CCSS, teachers must learn to recognize the language embedded in a topic and select a language for instruction related to the topic, followed by a formative assessment of EL students on those language skills and preparing them for standardized assessments containing these skills. Dr. Moore also recommends think-pair-share activities, where students are asked to think about a question on their own and the language needed to respond; they first share these thoughts with a partner and then the whole group. Think-pair-share acts as an informal assessment of the knowledge ELs have gained at the close of an instructional lesson.

18. What are some of the methodologies that are used in order to develop the lesson?

Dr. Sarah Moore discusses three methods to include in lesson development: student interaction, contextualizing, and teaching key vocabulary. Some examples of interaction activities that could be used in instruction are think-pair-share, circle chats, and Generating Interaction between Schemata and Text (GIST). In think-pair-share, teachers ask a thought-provoking question and allow students to pair up to discuss their answers. Students then share their thoughts with the whole group. Similarly, circle chats allow students to pair up with another student to discuss their answer to the teacher's question. Students form an inner and outer circle, rotating partners with each subsequent question. The GIST activity allows students to work together in groups to generate one sentence that summarizes the main point of a passage. The teacher then selects a reporter from one group to share. This activity can be repeated with the next passages until the entire text is summarized. Teachers can provide

meaningful context to content by elaborating rather than simplifying content, making adaptations or modifications to texts, and using questioning strategies to highlight language context. This can be achieved through text charting (connecting thoughts in the text to the question words “who,” “what,” “when,” “where,” and “how”), predicting what will happen in a passage before, during, and after reading, and using double-entry journals, where students can connect important quotes from the text to their own experiences. Integrating key vocabulary into instruction is also critical to promoting EL students’ success, and can be achieved through using dictionaries, paraphrasing, and teaching root words and affixes of key vocabulary.

19. What are some strategies for vocabulary development in context?

To integrate key vocabulary into instruction, teachers can provide dictionaries with images, sample sentences, translations, and synonyms. Dictionaries can be an especially beneficial tool in settings with highly content-related language, like the language used in math and science. Teachers can restate or paraphrase in-text key vocabulary to demonstrate word meaning, and teach root words and affixes associated with key vocabulary.

20. Can you discuss the models of Specifically Designed Academic Instruction (SDAIE) versus Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP)?

SDAIE and SIOP are models of Sheltered Instruction. Sheltered Instruction is an approach used in content-area classrooms in which teachers make grade-level content accessible for ELs while simultaneously encouraging students’ English language development. This approach to supporting ELs includes practices such as posting both language objectives and content objectives, adapting instruction based on students’ English language proficiency, building on students’ background experiences, and providing opportunities for students to use both oral and written language in the classroom.

21. How can ESOL teachers best help classroom teachers?

Research shows that teachers generally feel under-prepared to teach English language learners. One method to help classroom teachers better understand the needs of EL students is peer coaching and collaboration, especially among teachers with varying levels of expertise. Another beneficial tool for classroom teachers is professional development that targets the specific needs of English language learners. CAL’s current research program, Education Connections, is an online professional development program for teachers that helps them plan for instruction that is aligned to the Common Core and other content standards and addresses the needs of EL students.