

## Enhancing Academic Instruction for Adolescent English Language Learners With or at Risk for Learning Disabilities

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*An increasing number of children worldwide attend schools where the language of instruction does not match their native language, presenting significant challenges with learning the content and vocabulary of academic content areas (e.g., social studies, science). In the U.S., these students are designated as English language learners (ELLs)—students who are acquiring English as a second language while also participating in content instruction that is delivered in English. For ELLs who are also identified as having learning disabilities, the reading and language demands of content area instruction are overwhelming, creating even greater barriers to their academic learning, particularly in secondary school settings in which the textbooks and language of instruction include complex concepts and technical vocabulary. This article outlines pathways to academic learning for ELLs and students with learning disabilities and presents instructional strategies to support the development of reading and language proficiency simultaneously with making content learning accessible.*

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Shifting demographics are increasing the diversity in today's classrooms worldwide. Children are attending schools where the language of instruction does not match their native language. In the U.S., there are over 11 million school-age students (approximately 21%) whose families speak a language other than English as their home language (Kena et al., 2016). The term English language learners (ELLs) is used to designate students in the U.S. who are learning English as an additional language and have not met criteria on a test of English language proficiency. In the 2013-14 school year, 9.3% of the student population, or 4.5 million students, were designated as ELL. Of those students, approximately 11%, or around 500,000, are identified as being ELLs with disabilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2015). These students face the challenge of acquiring English language proficiency while also learning rigorous academic content that is delivered via instruction in English.

The achievement gap between ELLs and non-ELLs in reading and mathematics is persistent and well documented in the annual testing called the National Assessment of Educational Progress, or NAEP. Only about 7%

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of fourth grade ELLs and 3% of eighth grade ELLs in the U.S. score at or above proficiency in reading (NAEP, 2016). Furthermore, having a disability and ELL status does not bode well for academic outcomes. Though ELLs in general scored lower in reading than native English speakers, ELLs with disabilities scored lower than other students with disabilities, and lower than ELLs without disabilities (NAEP, 2016).

The impact of reading difficulties is far-reaching. To be successful in content area classes (e.g., social studies, science), students must understand multiple discipline-specific terms, and develop discipline-specific reading skills, such as being able to connect complex ideas or grasp cause and effect relationships. The increasing complexity and sophistication of subject matter text presents nearly insurmountable challenge for struggling readers in general (Reed & Vaughn, 2012; Torgesen et al., 2007), but particularly for ELLs and students with learning disabilities (LD) (Cummins, 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). ELLs and students with LD in secondary settings are likely to require intensive reading intervention as well as content-specific reading support (Hemphill et al., 2015; Reed & Vaughn, 2012; Vaughn et al., 2015).

Content teachers, though expert in their subject matter, are not typically experts in reading instruction; however, research shows they could improve students' academic learning by teaching content-specific reading strategies. More specifically, embedding reading strategies into content instruction is likely to improve academic outcomes for students with disabilities and ELLs. Yet, content teachers often lack professional development opportunities focused on literacy in general, as well as the more discipline-specific reading required in content classes (Hakuta & Santos, 2013; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). In this article, we discuss feasible and evidence-based practices for building vocabulary and academic language during content instruction.

### **EMBEDDING READING INSTRUCTION IN CONTENT INSTRUCTION**

A meta-analysis of reading interventions for students with learning disabilities in the middle grades showed moderate to large effects (Solis et al., 2012). Most of these interventions used a strategy-based approach and were delivered within special education services. Several included studies focused on strategies for getting the main idea and summarizing content, both of which are relevant to content area reading. Additionally, explicit vocabulary instruction that focuses on word meaning, independent word use, and how to approach unknown words is important (Kamil et al., 2008).

Recent studies have documented the impact of teaching reading strategies within the context of academic subject areas for struggling readers. One example, PACT (Promoting Acceleration of Comprehension and Content Through Text), is a content-embedded reading intervention implemented in secondary social studies classes (Vaughn et al., 2013). The instructional rou-

tines of PACT foster reading comprehension processes through mixed-ability peer group activities that engage students in activating background knowledge, connecting new ideas to prior learning, building understanding of essential vocabulary, and discussing key concepts. Swanson, Wanzek, Vaughn, Roberts and Fall (2015) reported significant effects for students with disabilities in PACT classrooms compared to students with disabilities in comparison classrooms that did not use PACT on both content knowledge ( $ES = .26$ ) and reading comprehension ( $ES = .34$ ), with effects of similar magnitude for all students in PACT versus non-PACT classrooms (Vaughn et al., 2013). Swanson and colleagues (2015) conclude that, “when students with disabilities receive general education instruction in social studies, there are instructional enhancements that can be made to improve their learning as well as the learning of their peers” (pp. 439-440).

Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR) is another well-documented multi-strategy approach to teaching reading comprehension within content classrooms. CSR has been shown to be effective with diverse groups of students, including ELLs (e.g., Boardman, Klingner, Buckley, Annamma, & Lasser, 2015; Klingner, Boardman, Eppolito, & Schonewise, 2012) and students with learning disabilities (e.g., Kim et al., 2006; Vaughn et al., 2011). CSR is designed to be used in general education classrooms with diverse groups of students, who work collaboratively in small groups. Students learn two reading comprehension strategies designed to activate background knowledge and set a purpose for reading prior to reading (preview strategy), use comprehension monitoring and main idea strategies during reading, and wrap up procedures to generate and answer questions and review key ideas. The collaborative grouping is particularly important because students engage in discussion of vocabulary and key ideas associated with the content learning.

#### **EMBEDDING ENGLISH LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT INTO CONTENT INSTRUCTION**

At secondary levels, ELLs, and especially ELLs with disabilities, face considerable challenges of meeting intense demands of content area curriculum while mastering both conversational and academic English. Academic language competence is key to academic success for diverse populations of learners including ELLs (Bailey, 2012; Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, & Jung, 2010; Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012; Meltzer & Hamann, 2005). Recently, the dichotomy of academic language vs. conversational language has been replaced by the idea of a linguistic continuum that features predictable structures and features by content area (Snow & Uccelli, 2009). These features include specialized vocabulary, variation in frequency of grammatical structures, and language uncommon outside of school language functions (Bailey, 2007). Thus, it is important that English language instruction for ELLs is multidimensional and covers lexical (word level), grammatical (sentence level), and discourse (discourse level) dimensions of language.

**Figure 1. Word, Sentence and Discourse Levels of Academic Language and Their Content Specific Features.**

Levels of Academic Language	Features	Social Studies	Science	Mathematics
Word Level	Content specific proper nouns	Hatshepsut; Tutankhamun	Arsenic; Barium	Pythagorean theorem
	Multisyllabic content specific terms	pharaoh	alkaline	quotient
	Vocabulary featuring Latin and Greek roots	civilization	photosynthesis	hypotenuse
	Polysemous vocabulary with content specific meaning	Great Depression	“It’s often said that <b>depression</b> results from a chemical imbalance”	“angle of depression”
	Content-specific meaning of prepositions	Mary Queen <i>of</i> Scots (the Queen who ruled <i>over</i> Scotland)	nitration <i>of</i> benzene (a process that happens <i>with</i> benzene)	of (multiplication; addition as in “total of”)
Examples of general academic terms: define, estimate, argue, predict				
Sentence Level	Complex and compound sentences, often with embedded clauses and/or long noun phrases and passive voice	The development of this civilization reflects a settlement pattern that has occurred repeatedly throughout history.	Regardless of the organism they are a part of, cells carry out the basic processes of life in similar ways.	Write an inequality that, when solved, will illustrate the difference between...
	Examples of nominalization:	Colonialism	Evolution	Probability
Discourse Level	Content area specific dominant genres	Argumentation/Analysis; Argumentation/Comparison; Informational or Explanatory/Definition or Description	Analysis; comparison; Informational or Explanatory/Procedural-Sequential	Argumentation/Analysis; Informational or Explanatory/Procedural-Sequential

Figure 1 delineates the three levels of academic language and provides content-specific examples and the complexity of each level of academic language that ELLs are likely to encounter in content area textbooks and class presentations. It provides educators with a roadmap of possible challenges and how to successfully support and scaffold students' learning. It is important to note that some of the features described present a particular difficulty for ELLs, especially those with learning disabilities. For example, while many students might have a hard time acquiring multisyllabic content-specific terms and words with Latin and Greek roots, ELL students need support distinguishing various content-specific meanings of polysemous words and recognizing the meaning of prepositions. Additionally, general academic terms, especially verbs (e.g., "argue," "define," "compare"), often presuppose specific academic actions, such as providing examples, making citations, and referring to concrete details. In this context, ELLs would benefit from explicit modeling of such academic behaviors by peers and teachers.

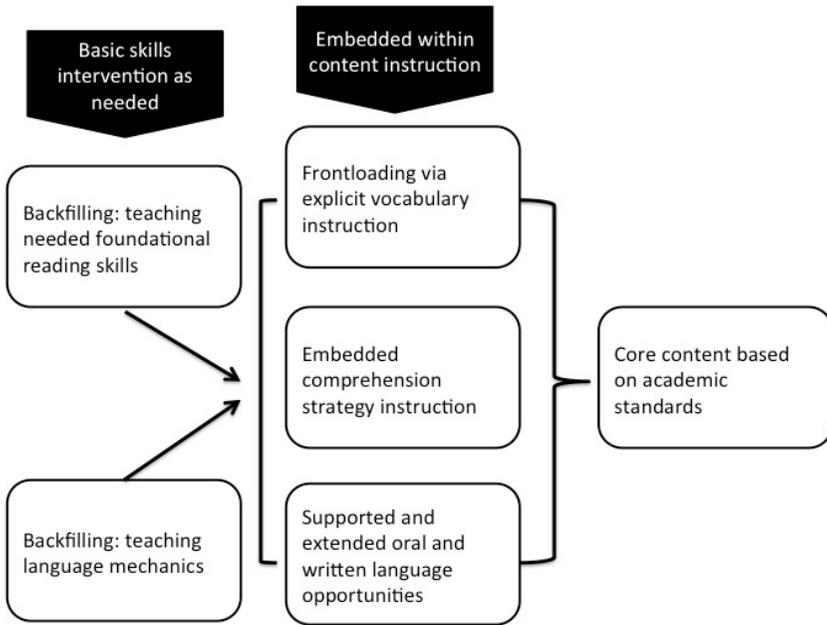
#### **PATHWAYS TO ACADEMIC LEARNING FOR ELLS WITH DISABILITIES**

We propose a pathway of access to content and provide examples of embedded reading and oral language strategies to support active participation in academic content and facilitate learning of complex content. The dual challenge that ELLs face is acquiring English language skills simultaneously with learning content standards. Learning the language of the content, or academic language, is critical to academic success. Yet, developing English proficiency is more than simply learning academic vocabulary. ELLs must learn the phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics, or language functions. Though the rate of acquisition may vary for ELLs, the route is fairly predictable (Snow & Katz, 2010). Students move from very basic grammar and vocabulary to increasingly complex forms of language use.

Figure 2 depicts points of entry into scaffolding reading and language support for ELLs. In order to fully participate in and benefit from the core academic content, ELL students must navigate the intersection of language and learning tasks specific to the academic discipline. For ELLs, the following abilities develop gradually over time:

- Receptive and productive language processes, or the ability to listen and understand language and the ability to express ideas through speaking or writing.
- Ability to respond to communication and learning demands with accuracy
- Understanding of details and procedures during instruction
- Grasp of the complexity and coherence of ideas in oral and written language

**Figure 2. Pathways to Academic Learning for ELLs.**



***Backfilling: Basic Skills Intervention***

The concept of “*backfilling*” applies to filling in gaps in students’ basic reading and oral language skills in the second language. Because ELLs vary widely in their sociocultural backgrounds, including their exposure to the second or additional language (e.g., English for U.S. ELLs), level of prior education in their primary language or home country, and their acquisition of literacy and oral language in their primary language (Snow & Katz, 2010), students will vary in terms of the level of direct support they will need in reading and second-language acquisition.

Students who have had some exposure to their second language within their family or community contexts, as well as those who have had ample formal schooling in their primary language, will require less backfilling. Their point of entry into the pathway to content learning may focus less on the backfilling process and more on the middle phase, providing contextualized support for vocabulary, comprehension and writing tasks. Informal diagnostic literacy assessments provide information on the extent to which foundational skills are in place, since these skills are not typically addressed in secondary settings, having been taught in elementary grades. Many ELLs with some proficiency still experi-

ence critical gaps in foundational skills that could be addressed with short-term intervention. Learning to read in a second language involves transferring some acquired skills (e.g., phonemic awareness, understanding of text structure) while other skills will require intentional instruction. ELLs who have gaps in their formal schooling or who have had limited exposure to their second language are likely to require more extensive support in foundational reading skills and language mechanics, best addressed through intervention and language support services.

### ***Content-Embedded Support for Learning***

Within the context of content instruction, there are several strategies that support students' active engagement in oral and written language tasks. *Frontloading* involves preparing students for upcoming content by explicitly pre-teaching key vocabulary and concepts so that, during whole-class instruction, ELL students will have confidence in understanding words and engaging in class discussions of concepts. Additionally, teaching reading comprehension strategies using content-specific text demonstrates how to apply strategies and connect them to a particular academic discipline using the concepts and vocabulary words in context. Writing support in the context of content instruction helps students to acquire the ability to communicate using discipline-specific language and concepts. Sample strategies for these processes are provided below:

#### **STRATEGIES FOR FRONTLOADING VOCABULARY**

### ***Explicitly Teach Morphology***

Teaching morphology, the study of the structure of words, is important for all students, but is especially helpful for ELLs (Lesaux, Kieffer, Kelley, & Harris, 2014). Teaching morphology includes teaching students the meanings of frequent root words and common prefixes and suffixes (affixes), particularly as they apply to content learning. If ELLs learn root words and affixes, they have a strategy to use when they come across complex and unfamiliar vocabulary (Fishley, Konrad, Hessler, & Keesey, 2012). For example, a common social studies word “desalinization” is a good word for this strategy because it has a prefix (de-), a root word (saline), and a suffix (-ization).

### ***Teach Cognates***

A word that looks similar to a word in another language and also has a similar meaning is called a cognate. Words from Spanish, French and Italian are the most likely to have English cognates. For example, although it's pronounced a little differently, the word “hospital” has the same meaning in both Spanish and English. However, make sure students are aware of false cognates (i.e., words that look similar in both languages but do not have the same origin). The word “embarazada”, which means pregnant in Spanish, is a false cognate for the word embarrassed.

### ***Pre-teach Vocabulary Using Sentence Frames***

A sentence frame is a fill-in-the-blank structure for using a newly learned word. Learning a new word and its definition does not readily translate into ways to meaningfully use the word. Giving a sentence structure scaffolds the integration of a new word into students' lexicon, by providing the basic structure for its use (Fisher, Rothenberg, & Frey, 2008). For example, students may learn the word "represent" as "to stand in place of something." This is a word that could be used across content areas, so is a useful word to teach. However, students must learn how it applies in different contexts. In math, a letter or symbol would represent a variable. In social studies, an elected official would represent constituents. To effectively use sentence frames, provide one or two examples along with the written sentence frame, then ask students to use the frame with a partner. This sentence frame uses the key word, "represent":

*The \_\_\_\_\_ will represent the \_\_\_\_\_ in \_\_\_\_\_.*

Examples could include, "The *spokesperson* will represent the *students* in the *school assembly*," and, "The *symbol* will represent *mountains* on the *map*."

### ***Build Depth of Word Knowledge***

Typical vocabulary instruction occurs on an as-needed basis, to get through a particular lesson or text. Observation studies have documented that only about 5-10% of instructional time is devoted to explicit vocabulary instruction (Francis, Rivera, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006; Scott, Jamieson-Noel, & Asselin, 2003). For ELLs, this is vastly insufficient. ELLs need explicit and deep vocabulary instruction, with multiple exposures across contexts and opportunities to engage in meaningful use (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008; 2013). Beck et al. (2013) outline a sequence for introducing words and building depth of knowledge through multiple exposures, over extended time and expanding students' understanding.

### ***Structure Peer Discussion of Words to Deepen Understanding***

Instruction should teach students *how* to engage in dialogue, using guided routines, sentence frames, and modeling. Teachers begin by giving an explicit purpose for the discussion, then making clear connections between the *text* and the *discussion* of words, their meanings and usages. For example, after teaching the word, density, in the context of population density, with a working definition of "amount of people living within a specific area," students meet in groups to come up with an answer to the following question, "How does population density impact families? Give at least three examples."

## EMBEDDED COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION

### ***Build and Activate Background Knowledge Specific to the Content***

This was discussed above in the context of vocabulary instruction, but also applies to comprehension within content instruction. For ELLs and students with disabilities, it is important for teachers to remember to stop and make sure students have the foundational knowledge necessary for the lessons. For example, a student who has recently immigrated from a tropical region may not understand that snow is rain that is frozen due to the cold temperature. A simple explanation may make a lesson on weather more meaningful to students who have not experienced this phenomenon.

### ***Teach Comprehension Monitoring***

Comprehension monitoring is a metacognitive skill that sits at the intersection of reading and language use. Self-awareness of a breakdown of understanding can occur with both oral language and reading (Connor et al., 2014; Kim & Phillips, 2014). Struggling readers often have difficulty understanding what they read, but they are often unaware that they are experiencing difficulty with meaning (Block & Pressley, 2002; Connor et al., 2014). Strategies to support metacognitive self-awareness of understanding, or comprehension monitoring processes, will equip ELLs and students with disabilities with ways to approach content learning, especially text reading. A well developed strategy for teaching comprehension monitoring is “Click and Clunk” included in Collaborative Strategic Reading (CSR), a multi-component reading comprehension instructional process (Boardman et al., 2014; Klingner et al., 2012; Swanson et al., 2011). Through modeling and teacher think-aloud, students learn to “catch” instances of comprehension breakdown:

Click: When you understand what you are reading, everything seems to be “clicking along.”

Clunk: When you don’t understand what you are reading, you hit a “clunk” that stops your reading.

Students learn “fix-up strategies” as ways to repair misunderstandings:

Fix-Up Strategies: When we hit a clunk, we need to know what to do about it.

CSR includes four fix-up strategies:

1. Reread the sentence with the clunk in it. Look for key ideas to help you figure out the word. Think about what makes sense.
2. Reread the sentences right before and right after the clunk, looking for clues.
3. Look for a prefix or suffix that might help.
4. Break apart the word and look for smaller words that you know.

### ***Teach Main Idea Strategies***

Identifying main ideas is challenging in content text, but serves the purpose of helping students to remember key ideas. Content text is typically conceptually dense and involves reading levels beyond grade level (Fazio & Gallagher, 2014; Fisher & Frey, 2014). Explicit instruction in identifying main ideas helps students to recall and connect key ideas (Boardman et al., 2015).

Paragraph Shrinking from Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS; e.g., Fuchs, Fuchs, Yazdian, & Powell, 2002; Saenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005) and Get the Gist (e.g., Boardman et al., 2015; Swanson et al., 2011) are similar main idea strategies included in peer support routines that have been widely researched across age groups and content areas, with English language learners and students with disabilities. The same routine is used in both PALS and CSR; the difference is that in PALS the paragraph shrinking is done with a partner and in CSR, it is done within a mixed ability small group setting. The main idea routine consists of:

1. State the “who” or “what” the paragraph is mostly about
2. Identify the most important information about the “who” or “what” in the paragraph
3. Write a 10-word or less sentence that states the main idea.

### ***Teach Text Structure***

It is important to provide explicit instruction and support for ELLs and students with disabilities to help them understand common text structures used in complex content area text (Albro, Williams, Wijekumar, Meyer, & Harris, 2015; Williams, Stafford, Lauer, Hall, & Pollini, 2009). When students are unaware of descriptive, sequential, problem-solution, cause and effect, and compare-contrast text structures, it is more difficult for them to glean meaning from the text and find answers to questions within the text. Highlighting key words as clues to text structure type is a simple way to support students. For example, the compare-contrast text structure often includes words such as “because,” “therefore,” and “so” (Williams et al., 2007).

### **SUPPORTED AND EXTENDED ORAL AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES**

To fully comprehend the material and demonstrate mastery of content in English, ELLs need opportunities to engage in extended oral and written academic language production at the sentence and discourse levels. Research shows that comprehensive oral academic discourse practice leads to deeper understanding of content and better developed essays which are a common way of assessment of content area knowledge in secondary classrooms (Osipova, 2014).

### ***Expansion and Extension***

Without careful monitoring of student engagement and effective language supports, ELLs, and especially ELLs with disabilities, tend to provide

minimal and often one-to-two word responses. Two instructional approaches - expansion and extension - widely used in language development- could be implemented in this context. *Expansion* consists of affirmatively responding to the student's utterance with its more syntactically sophisticated version while preserving the order of words used by the student (McCormick, Loeb, & Schiefelbusch, 2003). Through this, the teacher or a peer whose language is more advanced is modeling a more extended response, while acknowledging the correct response initially given by the student. Expansion is appropriate to use with one-two word and fragmentary (incomplete sentence) responses. *Extension* consists of positively responding to the student's utterance, while providing additional information and extending the syntactic structure of the original response (McCormick et al., 2003). Take for example a situation in which a teacher asks, "Who was the first President of the United States?" and a student responds, "George Washington." Using *expansion* approach, the teacher will respond, "Yes, George Washington was the first President of the United States," turning a two-word response into a complete sentence and modeling a slightly more sophisticated syntactic construction. Using *extension* approach, the teacher might respond, "Yes, George Washington was the first President of the United States and the Commander-in-Chief of the Continental Army during the American Revolutionary War." With extension, the teacher is modeling a more sophisticated syntactic structure and adding additional information to the student's initial response. Extension is appropriate to use with fragmentary or short simple sentence responses. Both expansion and extension approaches support students' academic language production on a sentence level. The approaches, especially extension, can be adapted to supporting students' written responses as well. In this case, the teacher will model an extended sentence structure and request that a student adds more information to a sentence following the model syntactic pattern.

### ***Encouraging Precise and Well-Developed Responses***

Classroom responses of ELLs and especially ELLs with disabilities often are not only underdeveloped, but also lack specificity (Osipova, 2014). For example, when asked what distinguishes George Washington from other presidents, an ELL student might respond, "He was a good leader." This non-specific response that uses a general characterization "good" presents at least two weaknesses: 1) lack of more precise adjectives in student's lexicon and 2) difficulty with extending the thought. There are different ways to scaffold this response. On the word level, the teacher could provide students with word walls that list a variety of adjectives. On the sentence level, as described above, the teacher might use extension to model a more sophisticated response. An alternative to extension would be to provide the students with guiding questions and response sentence starters to help them independently extend the response and to define

“good” through concrete details that would follow. Figure 3 presents teacher’s prompts of different complexity and student response starters that would help the students ease into a longer, more sophisticate and specific response.

**Figure 3. Scaffolding Students’ Responses Through Teacher’s Prompts and Student Response Starters. Adapted from Zwiers & Crawford (2009).**

Student’s Sample Response	Academic Tasks That Would Scaffold a More Extended Response	Teacher’s Prompts	Student Response Starters
	Clarify and Elaborate	Can you tell us more about...? What do you mean by...? What makes you think that?	One reason why I think... There are several reasons for ...
	Support ideas with examples	Can you be more specific? What other words could you use to define him other than “good”? Can you give an example? What evidence do you have to support this?	For example,... In the text [video, PowerPoint presentation] it was mentioned that... Such actions, events like...support this claim.
	Apply and connect	How does this relate to our lives? How does this relate to modern time?	Today, we can see similar/different... In my life...
	Paraphrase and summarize	What have we learned so far? Could you say it in your own words/ differently?	The main point/ idea is... The gist of the lesson/text/narrative is...

***From Authoritative to Dialogic Teacher-Student Interaction***

Another way to support and extend academic oral language production in students is to switch from an authoritative to a dialogic style of teacher-student interaction (Chin, 2007). Authoritative teacher-student interactions feature closed-ended questions to which there is only one right answer and evaluative comments on behalf of the teacher. These interactions seldom go beyond initiation-response-evaluation sequence in which the teacher does two thirds of the talking. For example, a teacher might ask, “Who was at the top of the Egyptian social pyramid?” a question that is satisfied by a single word response. In an authoritative style of teacher-student interaction, student responses get evaluated, labeled as correct or incorrect, and the lesson moves on with hardly any progress in oral academic language development. In contrast, dialogic teacher-student interactions feature open-ended questions, fewer evaluative comments, and a multi-turn initiation-response sequence in which the teacher continues to probe the student’s knowledge and invites other students to join the discussion. Consider the following dialogic teacher-student interaction:

Teacher [Initiation]: Who was at the top of the Egyptian social pyramid?

Student 1 [Response]: Egyptian Gods!

Teacher [Prompt]: Ok...Do you remember who else was at the top of the pyramid?

Student 1 [Response]: And Pharaoh.

Teacher [Prompt]: Everyone, who can summarize what [student 1] just said?

Student 2 [Response]: Egyptian Gods and pharaohs were at the top.

Teacher [Evaluation]: That’s right; at the top of the Egyptian social pyramid were gods and pharaohs.

Note that the teacher can elicit longer interactions by further prompting.

***Extending Responses and Increasing the Challenge***

Effective responsive instruction does not only model and break down complex tasks for students who struggle with academic language, it also encompasses continuing increase in task challenge in response to students’ successful mastery of certain language and cognitive functions. In this context, Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom & Krathwohl, 1956) provides an excellent sequence for gradual rise in task difficulty. In the example of dialogic interaction above, the teacher asked the students to summarize the two responses provided by student 1. If the teacher wanted to continue the discussion but increase the level of reasoning, the next tasks might be comparing and contrasting, or explaining. Next, the teacher could ask the students to apply the concept of social pyramid to modern societies, which would be a considerably more challenging task. Figure

4 presents the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy and the academic tasks that go with them in the progressing difficulty order from top to the bottom. When working with ELLs, and especially with ELLs who have disabilities, it is important to provide students with explicit models (both oral and written) of each of the academic tasks/actions delineated below.

**Figure 4. Progression of Difficulty of Academic Tasks Based on Bloom’s Taxonomy. Adapted from Anderson, Krathwohl, & Bloom (2001).**

Bloom’s Taxonomy Level	Academic Tasks That Correspond to Bloom’s Taxonomy Levels
Remember	Recognize Recall
Understand	Interpret Exemplify Classify Summarize Infer Compare Explain
Apply	Perform Implement
Analyze	Differentiate Organize Attribute
Evaluate	Check Critique
Create	Produce Generate Plan

*Supporting Students’ Written Language: Graphic Organizers and Essay*

### *Frames*

Supporting students' written language should also include scaffolding instruction at discourse/text level. When presenting secondary students with an essay task, it is important to discuss the assigned genre as well as the expected genre conventions and organizational patterns of the text. For example, a position paper needs to contain some direct quotations or references to facts, while a compare and contrast essay might have a different structure depending on whether the writer plans to address similarities and differences in two or multiple paragraphs. Providing a sample essay or a sample text not only makes the task at hand more concrete, but also provides the learners with an opportunity to identify the overall main idea and analyze the ways to communicate it through lexical, syntactic and discourse features that contribute to it. Student activities such as highlighting or underlining key text features (e.g., thesis statements, topic sentences, supporting details) and color-coding the salient features of a specific writing genre (e.g., sequential markers "first," "next," "further" or markers of comparison "on the contrary," "while") serve as meaningful pre-writing activities.

Some of the widely used strategies for scaffolding academic writing for secondary ELLs are the use of graphic organizers and essay frames (Graham & MacArthur, 2013). These can be used to provide structure to individual paragraphs (e.g., OREO organizer used for four-sentence paragraphs in a persuasive essays: opinion-reason-example-rewrite opinion or a more general TREE organizer: topic sentence- three reasons-ending-examine if you have all parts (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2003) to graphic organizers that scaffold composition of the entire essay (e.g., hamburger organizer where the top bun stands for the introduction; lettuce, cheese, tomato, meat represent body paragraphs, and the bottom bun represents conclusion). A different variety of graphic organizers are pre-writing graphic organizers that help the writers organize their thoughts before they begin writing. Ferlazzo and Hull-Sypniewski (2014) describe creating a three part variety of the commonly used two-part Venn diagram to help EL students think about ethos, pathos, and logos arguments that they could use in their essays.

Essay frames are another useful way to support secondary ELLs' written expression. Essay frames are tools that make explicit the organizational structure of the text that needs to be composed. Figure 5 presents two examples of a compare and contrast essay frames: block arrangement and point-by-point arrangement.

**Figure 5. Two Examples of Compare and Contrast Essay Frames.**

Block Arrangement (4 paragraphs)	Point-by-Point Arrangement (5 paragraphs)
I. Introduction: State your position for whether A and B are similar or different.	I. Introduction: State your position for whether A and B are similar or different.
II. Discuss A and its defining characteristics	II. First Similarity/Difference A. Discuss A Discuss B
III. Discuss B and its defining characteristics (make sure characteristics you are discussing for A and B fall within the same categories)	III. Second Similarity/Difference Discuss A Discuss B
IV. Conclusion	IV. Third Similarity/Difference A. Discuss A B. Discuss B V. Conclusion

In comparison to graphic organizers, essay frames present struggling writers with a more linear roadmap for their writing, while listing specific written academic language tasks in which the writer needs to engage in each section (e.g., “state your position,” “discuss similarities”, etc.). Essay frames are also similar to essay outlines that many teachers require secondary students to create before composing an essay. In this sense, essay frames serve as a scaffolding tool to promote creating of outlines and ultimately well-developed essays.

**SUMMARY**

The body of evidence-based strategies for supporting the content learning of ELLs with and without disabilities is increasing. Backfilling, or providing short-term intervention on basic reading skills and building requisite background knowledge are essential for successful participation in content learning. Additionally, focusing on contextualized reading strategy instruction, building deep and content-specific academic vocabulary, providing intentional opportunities for using language in discipline-specific ways and supporting reading and language use are important means of helping students to access challenging content.

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