

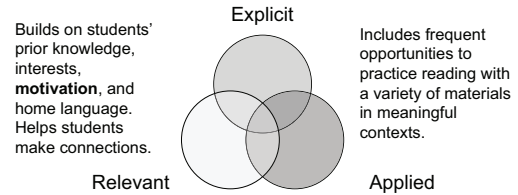


Helping English Language Learners Read

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Evidence-based Literacy Instruction

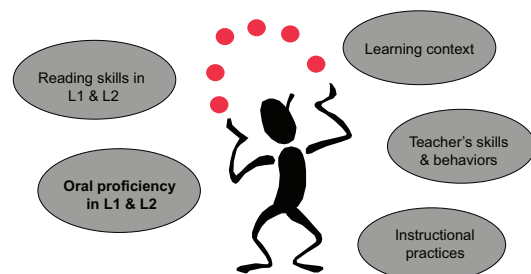
Includes explicit instruction in phonological awareness, the alphabetic code, fluency, vocabulary development, reading comprehension, and, for ELLs, oral language.



Opportunity to Learn

- Optimal literacy instruction for ELLs accounts for the influence of culture and experience on cognition and learning, behavior and communication, language development and motivation.
- Some LD diagnoses of ELLs are made not because students have internal deficits of some kind, but rather because they have not received an adequate opportunity to learn.
- Some children are diagnosed not because they have disabilities, but b/c they are in "disabling contexts."
- Many ELLs are provided with too few opportunities to develop their language and literacy skills.

Factors that Influence Learning to Read for English Language Learners



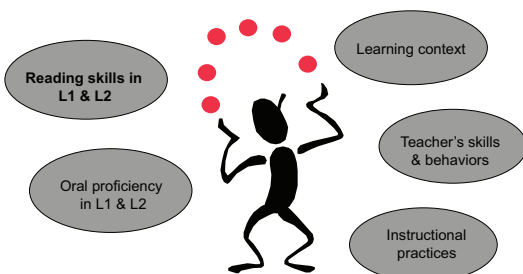
The Relationship b/w Oral Proficiency and Second-Language Reading

- L2 oral proficiency affects L2 reading.
- ELLs need some knowledge of English before they can successfully draw on L1 reading abilities when reading in English.
- Reading and oral language have a reciprocal relationship: Instruction in L2 reading comprehension facilitates gains in L2 oral skills.

Oral Language and ELLs

- Optimal programs for ELLs include a focus on oral English language development.
- ELLs benefit from frequent opportunities to engage in structured, supported, academic talk.
- **This focus on oral language development includes not only vocabulary, but also common language structures.**
- When students' oral language improves, so do their reading fluency and comprehension.

Factors that Influence Learning to Read for English Language Learners



Understanding Bilingual Students' Cognitive Reading Processes

- Concepts learned in one's first language transfer to English when the appropriate English vocabulary is learned.
- Native language literacy instruction promotes literacy in English.



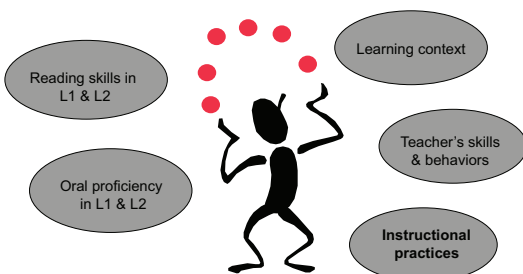
Differences b/w Second Language Readers and Native English Readers

- Translation, cognate awareness, and information transfer across languages are unique to L2 reading.
- Unknown vocabulary is more of an obstacle for bilingual readers.
- Good second-language readers focus much more on word meaning than do good monolingual readers.
- Cohesive signals (e.g., referents such as “them” or “it”) are more problematic.

Differences b/w More and Less Proficient Second Language Readers

- Proficient bilingual readers differ from marginally proficient or struggling bilingual readers in that they:
 - actively transfer information across languages,
 - translate from one language to another,
 - access cognates,
 - use more schematic knowledge,
 - use a greater variety of metacognitive and cognitive strategies and use them more frequently,
 - take more action on plans to solve breakdowns in comprehension and check their solutions more often, and
 - make better and/or more inferences.

Factors that Influence Learning to Read for English Language Learners



Phonological Awareness and ELLs

- Phonological awareness transfers from L1 to L2.
- Instruction in phonological awareness benefits ELLs.
- Phonological awareness (in English) can present special challenges to ELLs.
 - Some phonemes may not be present in the student's native language and, therefore, might be difficult to distinguish auditorily from similar sounds.
 - Sound placement in words differs across languages.
 - Phonological tasks with unknown sounds and words are more difficult.
- Teachers can help ELLs by finding out which phonemes exist and do not exist in their native language and helping them hear new sounds.

Alphabetic Principle, Decoding, and ELLs

- The process of learning to read in English is facilitated when students are already literate in their L1 and the orthographic systems of the two languages are similar.
 - Spanish and English share many similarities (e.g., the sounds represented by the letters *b, c, d, f, l, m, n, p, q, s,* and *t*).
 - However, vowels look the same in Spanish and English but represent different sounds. Therefore, English vowel sounds and their various spellings can be very challenging for ELLs.
- Unfamiliar phonemes and graphemes make decoding and spelling difficult.
- Not knowing English vocabulary prevents ELLs from using word meaning to figure out how to read a word.
- Learning letters and sounds can seem very abstract.

Fluency and ELLs

- Fluency includes both word recognition and comprehension
- ELLs typically have fewer opportunities to read aloud in English with feedback
- ELLs may read more slowly, with less understanding
- ELLs can have an accent and still read fluently
- Effective practices include:
 - Opportunities to hear a more expert reader model fluent, expressive reading (e.g., echo reading, tape-recordings)
 - Ensuring students understand text before they read it
 - Repeated reading
 - Classwide peer tutoring; partner reading

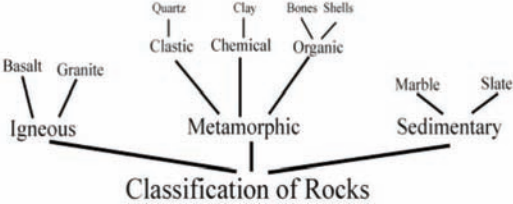
Vocabulary and ELLs

- Some ELLs are able to read phonetically (word calling) yet do not understand what they read.
- ELLs begin school knowing fewer English words and sayings than their peers.
- ELLs and English speakers may have different concepts for the same label.
- ELLs literate in an L1 that has many cognates with English have an important resource.

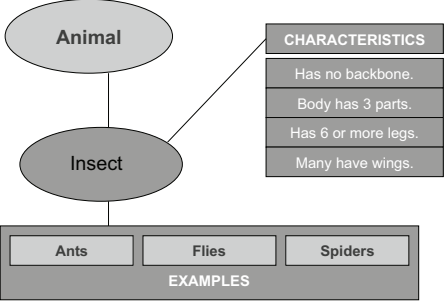
- ELLs can be confused by common words:
 - prepositions (e.g., “on,” “above”)
 - pronouns (e.g., “she,” “they”)
 - cohesion markers (e.g., “therefore,” “however”)
 - words with multiple meanings (e.g., “bat,” “light”)
 - figurative language such as similes (e.g., “swims like a fish”) or metaphors (e.g. “his stomach was a bottomless pit”)
 - idioms (e.g., “to know something inside out”)
- False cognates can perplex students (e.g., “fast” in German means “almost”; “embarasada” in Spanish means “pregnant”)

ACTIVITY: Remembering Vocabulary

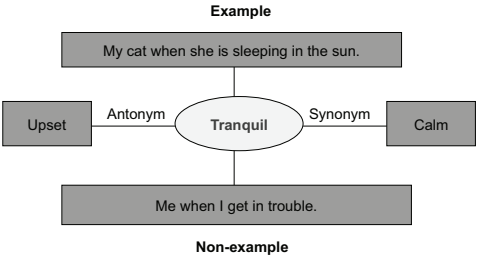
Sample Tree Diagram




Sample Concept Map




Sample Word Map




Reading Comprehension and ELLs

- Reading comprehension is a complex process of constructing meaning by coordinating a number of skills related to decoding, word reading, and fluency and the integration of background knowledge.
 - Many factors affect the reading comprehension of ELLs, such as:
 - language proficiency,
 - vocabulary knowledge,
 - ability to use comprehension strategies,
 - differences in text structure,
 - culture influences,
 - Interest,
 - schema.
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- To determine what ELLs comprehend, teachers should:
 - provide them with alternative ways to show understanding (e.g., in their native language, using diagrams), and
 - focus more on content than grammatical errors or accents.
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Reading Comprehension Strategies

- Typically little attention is paid to teaching ELLs how to use comprehension strategies, even in the upper grades, because teachers tend to focus on word recognition, pronouncing words correctly, and answering literal comprehension questions.
 - Teach BEFORE, DURING, and AFTER reading comprehension strategies.
 - Provide opportunities for collaboration.
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ACTIVITY



Swedes Win!

Switzerland put one stone in the middle and piled guards in front of it before Swedish second Cathrine Lindahl took out two stones with one shot to get the edge back. With her first stone, Swiss skip Mirjam Ott curled her rock around a guard, but it didn't get inside the Swedish rock that was sitting on the lip of the red 4-foot circle. Norberg cleared one of the stones away from the front so she would have a clean shot at the target, or house, if she needed it. If Norberg could convert with the hammer, the gold medal was theirs. They called timeout. The crowd made some noise. And then it fell quiet again. Norberg pushed out of the hack and let the rock slide. It bounced first off one yellow-handled Swiss rock and then the other, clearing them out of the scoring zone. As it came to rest in the white 8-foot circle - alone in the house - the Swedes celebrated.



Influence of Schema

- Second language readers better comprehend and remember passages that either are compatible with their native cultures or are considered more familiar.
 - When texts are inconsistent with the reader's expectations, comprehension is negatively affected and recall may be distorted.
- Activating background knowledge improves comprehension.



Prior Knowledge

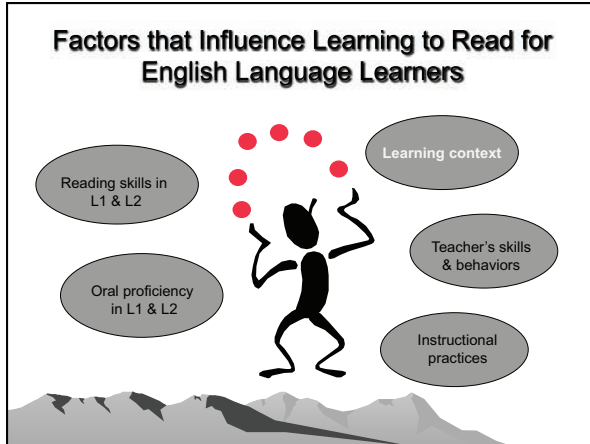
- Ask students to brainstorm what they already know about a topic.
 - Help students make connections between new content and prior learning.
 - Help students connect new learning with "real life" experiences outside of school.
- Provide common experiences that build students prior knowledge.
- Teach using thematic units that help students build in depth knowledge about a topic.
- Use graphic organizers when introducing new topics—add info as the unit progresses.



Motivation

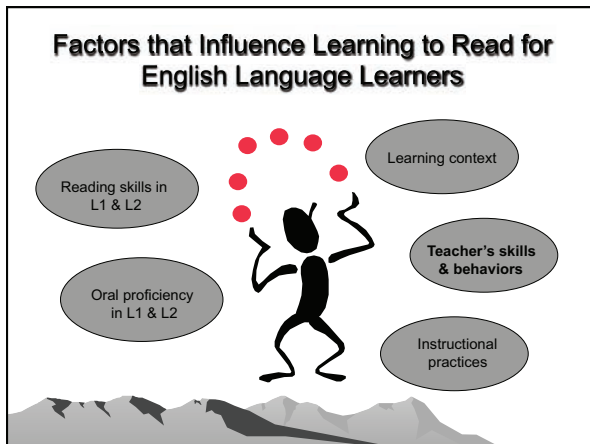
- Snow, Burns, and Griffin (1998) emphasized the importance of motivation in the precursor to the National Reading Panel report, "Preventing Reading Difficulties in Young Children," noting that "motivation is crucial."
- To promote motivation, include:
 - opportunities for social interaction and collaborative learning;
 - choices about reading materials and tasks;
 - independent reading activities that are purposeful and a good reader-text match;
 - instruction that is at an appropriate level and provides students with many opportunities for success; and
 - meaningful, interesting, engaging tasks that connect with outside-of-school experiences.





Contexts for Literacy Instruction

- We *can* close the achievement gap for culturally and linguistically diverse students by changing their **learning contexts** (Alvermann, 2005).
- Culturally and linguistically diverse students are more likely to excel academically when:
 - they are provided access to high quality teachers, programs, curricula, and resources;
 - they are taught with the most effective practices; and
 - their culture, language, heritage, and experiences are valued and used to facilitate their learning and development--every learner "brings a valid language and culture to the instructional context."



Teachers of ELL Students Need to Know:

- Instructional strategies linked to academic growth for culturally and linguistically diverse students.
- The language acquisition process and the unique needs of ELLs.
- Assessment procedures for monitoring progress, particularly in language and literacy.
- How to *differentiate* instruction for students who do not seem to be responding.

Opportunity to Learn? Instruction in an RTI Model

- All examples are from real classrooms with English language learners, most at beginning levels of English proficiency.
- The first two examples are of Tier 1 instruction.

Students are seated in a circle on the alphabet rug. Teacher asks them to stand up, and says, "Let's do the alphabet rap song." Teacher begins to rap and makes motions with her hands to symbolize sound-letter correspondence. Sings A-Alley, B-Bubba, C-Catina, D-Dee-dee... Students are trying to mimic the teacher, however, they are falling behind. [Students are not understanding this--the teacher is going too fast.] Teacher says, "Let's try it one more time." More and more students are falling behind to the point where the majority are just looking around and bumping into each other. They look like bumper cars. These students cannot keep up with the song and hand motions. Teacher, "S is for Sammy Snake (making a slithering motion)... V is for Vinny Vampire (motioning with her hands to her mouth that she had vampire fangs)... W is Willie Weasel..." (Orosco, 2007)

The whole Class is sitting in a circle (on the A-B-C rug), with the teacher seated at the head. Teacher says, "Yesterday, how many of you knew your sight words? One student speaks out, "One?" Another, "Three?" Teacher replies, "You are right. Three students were able to tell me their sight words. We need to practice these words; we are really behind. Every one of you should know these sight words by now. You need to practice these at home. Don't you practice these at home?" Teacher says this with frustration in her face and voice. Teacher states, "Only those 3 students will be able to pull from the treasure chest." ... Teacher begins sight words practice and holds up index cards with *Big, My, See, Like, I, At, This, And, Up, Have, Too*. Students repeat sight words as Teacher holds up index cards. This is a repetitive process. She then holds up the word "Big" without saying anything. One student says the word "Big." She holds up a another. "See." The same student says the word again. She holds up the word "see" again and tells the student who knew the previous answer not to say anything. Pause. Another says "see." She continues to go through this process with all the words, and says, "Okay guys, you need to practice these at home, you are not paying attention, you should have known these words by now." (Orosco, 2007)

Tier 2 Example

- The literacy teacher provides Tier 2 interventions. The following excerpt finds the literacy teacher reinforcing a previous literacy lesson that this homeroom teacher had started on Zebras.

Literacy teacher: "This book is called Zebra Play."

She starts singing, "*One little Zebra went out to play, on the savanna one fine day. (He) had such enormous fun. He asked another zebra to come.*"

Literacy teacher prompts one student to take off running like a Zebra. One student runs around the classroom (acting like a zebra). Literacy specialist picks another student to do the same. She then picks another and so forth. Literacy teacher is doing choral singing of "Zebra Play" as students run around the classroom. "...*They grew tired as they ran around. Therefore, they all lay down...*"


Students are running around; however, they are not singing or chanting the Zebra Play; they are just playing and running into each other.

Tier 3 Example


- The teacher has a master's degree in special education and has been teaching for about 20 years. She noted, "I teach LD by the book."
- 4 second-grade English language learners, all determined to have learning disabilities.


Teacher: "Boys and girls, we need to read our story, 'Polar Bears'. We need to listen to see what color they are, where they live or what they eat." Teacher directs students to look at the title page, asks what they think the book is about. No response. Teacher asks, "Are polar bears nice?" No response. Teacher begins to read: "Polar Bears live in the Arctic at the North Pole. The polar bear is a marine mammal... Polar bears are carnivores..." [OC: I wonder how many students know what a marine mammal is, or a carnivore.] ... As she is reading students are beginning to check out; one student is playing with the drawstring in his hooded sweater. Another two are whispering to each other. The teacher continues: "The white fur is important camouflage for the bears as they hunt their prey on the ice..."

[OC: What is camouflage? This story uses tough words for ESL students at this level. I wonder if the teacher knows whether these kids really understand this.] Teacher: "Okay let's talk about the story now. So what do they smell?" No reply. Teacher, "Anyone?" One student, "People." Teacher, "Good." [This was not in the story.] Teacher, "Do polar bears live here in Colorado?" Students, "Yes." Teacher, "Good. They could if they lived at the zoo." [Colorado was not in the story.] ... Only one student is responding, with one word answers. [OC: I wonder if this book is too difficult for them. However, it would work for these kids if the language was modeled and sheltered for them...] (Orosco, 2007)


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- Are the teachers implementing evidence-based instruction? Why do you think this?
 - What do you conclude about these students' opportunity to learn?
 - What would you do?


Decision Points when Students Struggle with Reading

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- How can teachers tell which students should receive additional interventions or who to refer for an evaluation for possible placement in special education?
 - Look at how many ELLs are struggling.
 - If the majority of ELLs are making little progress, the teacher should focus on improving instruction.
 - If most ELLs are doing well and only a few are struggling, the teacher should look more closely at what is going on with those individual students and consider that they may need additional support.

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- Scripted or pre-sequenced instructional approaches are problematic because the responsibility to adjust falls on the *child* to match the curriculum.
 - The child who cannot meet the program where it begins and stay in step soon falls behind.
 - Teachers must have enough flexibility to differentiate instruction and adapt a program to meet children's individual differences.

10 Guiding Questions

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1. Have I developed a strong, positive relationship with the child and his/her family?
 2. Do I personalize instruction? Do I value the child's linguistic and cultural background? Do I connect classroom learning to the child's daily experiences?
 3. Do I give enough attention to affect, interest, and motivation?
 4. Do I pay sufficient attention to the development of oral language?
 5. Am I aware of aspects of reading that can be confusing for ELLs?

6. Have I found out which sounds and letters are different in the child's first language than English so that I can clarify misunderstandings and provide additional practice?
 7. Do I adjust instruction to provide students with additional support when they do not seem to understand (e.g., explicit instruction at their level, more opportunities for meaningful practice)?
 8. Are the books I use interesting and at levels students can read and understand?
 9. Do I pre-teach key vocabulary and use multimedia, realia, appealing photos, charts, and other visuals to help make instruction comprehensible?
 10. Do I focus more on the content of students' responses than the form when checking for comprehension and provide multiple and varied ways of demonstrating learning?
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