

Educating English Learners (ELs)



**Columbus School
March 2020**

The RESC Alliance EL Strategies Desk Card



<p>Provide explicit vocabulary instruction for unfamiliar vocabulary prior to and during lesson (e.g. word walls, personal bilingual dictionaries, word cards with pictures, games, etc.).</p>	<p>Use scaffolding techniques and adapted content for comprehensible input (e.g. jigsaws, think alouds, graphic organizers, answer frames, sentence starters, taped text, adapted text, etc.).</p>
<p>Use visuals as much as possible, such as pictures, gestures, pointing, graphic organizers.</p>	<p>Provide supplementary materials, such as graphs, models, realia (actual objects), visuals.</p>
<p>Provide background knowledge and connect to students' prior knowledge (e.g. KWL charts, anticipation guides, bilingual dictionaries, journal writing in native language, creating bilingual books, etc.).</p>	<p>Learn about students' culture and native language to better understand learning needs (e.g. what are similarities of the phonetic systems?).</p>
<p>Expect reading skills to come slowly. If the student has learned to read in his/her native language, this will probably help him/her to transfer reading skills to English. However, the student may be pronouncing words, but not really comprehending.</p>	<p>Use gentle correction to encourage use of correct patterns while at the same time encouraging risk-taking with the language (e.g. Student says, "I eated breakfast." Teacher responds, "I ate breakfast, too. I ate toast. What did you eat?").</p>
<p>Modify activities and assessments according to the EL language level.</p>	<p>Frequent opportunities for oral interaction (e.g. Think-Pair-Share, Partner Talk, Cooperative Learning, etc.).</p>

General EL Strategies

The RESC Alliance

EL Strategies Desk Card

It'sich

STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS:

- Understands very little English
- Stage lasts six months to one year, typically
- May not talk at all; "silent period"
- Is learning to understand basic conversation & instructions such as "hello, how are you?", sit down, line up, etc."
- Is beginning to speak in one and two word phrases
- May have cultural conflicts or misunderstandings

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES:

- Ask "yes" or "no" questions (eg. "Is this a...?", "Does this...?")
- Use "point to", "circle", "find", "show me", "draw"
- Ask student to match pictures to words or objects
- Ask student to categorize objects

SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEVEL 1:

- Teach basic survival English, such as "bathroom," "lunch," "home"
- Help the student to learn the classroom routines
- Use a student buddy, if possible someone with the same language
- Use visual clues as much as possible, such as pictures, gestures, pointing, graphic organizers
- Create "I need" cards for students to hold up when he/she needs something
- Label objects around the room and around the school in English and other languages
- Provide books and audiobooks with patterned sentence structure and pictures
- Provide books and audiobooks in native language
- Use bilingual picture dictionary and have student create personal illustrated dictionaries
- Be patient. Give student a few weeks or months to adjust
- Learn what you can about the student's culture
- Use new vocabulary frequently in content areas. Emphasize key words and simplify grammar.
- Use seating arrangements to be conducive for cooperative (or collaborative) learning activities, seat EL students purposefully (near the teacher or next to a buddy)
- Modify your speech to aid comprehension, speak slowly and clearly
- When asking questions, allow for "wait time" more than typical (3-5 seconds)
- Allow EL students to talk to a peer in their native language when necessary to clarify understanding
- Make lessons visual. Use visual representations of new vocabulary and use graphs, maps, photographs, drawings, and charts to introduce new vocabulary and concepts with videos
- Use designated supports for EL for instruction, testing and assignments
- Teach explicit phonemic awareness, phonic rules and skills, depending on students literacy needs or literacy level
- Provide sentence and answer frames
- Provide ample opportunities for student to student interaction

LAS Links Level 1 *Beginner/Pre Production*

STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS:

- Follows most basic directions
- Can respond with one or two word answers
- Stage typically lasts six months to one year
- Uses English vocabulary that is still very limited
- Probably understands more than he/she can express
- May have cultural conflicts or misunderstandings

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES:

- Ask literal questions – who, when, where, what
- Ask questions with 1- 3 word answers
- Ask questions with an either/or option
- Ask student to list, name, tell which, categorize, draw, label

SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEVEL 2:

- Use visual clues as much as possible, such as pictures, gestures, pointing, graphic organizers
- Use a student buddy, if possible someone with the same language
- Teach explicit phonemic awareness, phonic rules and skills depending on literacy needs or literacy level
- Provide books and audiobooks with patterned sentence structure and pictures
- Label objects around the room and around the school in English and other languages
- Provide books and audiobooks in native language
- Use bilingual picture dictionary and have students create personal illustrated dictionaries
- Correct for grammar and spelling after the student has finished his/her writing
- Provide shortened text for reading and reading assignments with simplified language for grade level content
- Allow the student to verbalize or write what he wants to say, and the teacher can correct grammar and spelling later
- Give students a picture story without words and provide them with basic vocabulary for the story. Ask them to write sentences to describe each picture to create their own story
- Provide sentence and answer frames
- Introduce word study beginning in third grade
- Teach academic vocabulary and academic language explicitly in context
- Model correct usage; don't over-correct
- Provide content and language learning objectives for lessons
- Pre-teach vocabulary
- Provide needed background knowledge from the disciplines, along with connecting with students' own experiences
- Consider seating arrangements that are conducive for cooperative (or collaborative) learning activities
- Back up oral discussion with key words written on the board
- Teach organizational skills such as: text features, mnemonic devices, etc.
- Use anticipation guides
- Use list of key terms for previewing
- Accept simple written responses
- Use designated supports for EL for instruction, testing, and assignments

LAS Links Level 2 *Early Intermediate/ Early Production*

The RESC Alliance

EL Strategies Desk Card

STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS:

- Understands most *conversational* English vocabulary, but not necessarily *academic* vocabulary
- Speaks in simple sentences and has some incorrect grammar usage
- Stage lasts one year to two years, typically
- May not understand spoken or written English with complicated sentence patterns
- May not understand many idioms and homonyms
- May not grasp underlying meanings in a story because of vocabulary

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES:

- Ask how and why questions
- Check for understanding by asking student to tell you what something means
- Check for understanding by asking student to explain the assignment to you
- Ask student to tell about, describe, explain
- Ask student to explain similarities and differences

SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEVEL 3:

- Use bilingual picture dictionary
- Teach explicit phonemic awareness, phonic rules and skills through all grade levels as needed
- Encourage student to use full sentences
- Use designated supports for instruction, assignments and testing
- Provide shortened text
- Provide student with content and language learning objectives using student-friendly language
- Explain idioms and homonyms
- Model explicit writing skills, especially grammatical structure
- Provide sentence frames showing use of transition words
- Provide explicit instruction on academic vocabulary and academic language for units of study
- Focus on reading comprehension; use frequent comprehension checks
- Introduce expanded vocabulary
- Use models/charts/maps/timelines before, during, and after reading

LAS Links Level 3 *Intermediate/Speech Emergence*

STUDENT LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS:

- Approaching the use of fluent sentences using standard grammar
- May have difficulty understanding content-area materials where a high degree of literacy is required
- Has limited understanding of less commonly used words, idioms, and homonyms
- May have reading and writing skills below those of native English speaking students
- May not grasp underlying subtle meanings and nuances in a story because of vocabulary
- Stages 4 and 5 typically last three to five years

QUESTIONING TECHNIQUES:

- Ask how and why questions
- Check for understanding by asking student to tell you what something means
- Ask student to tell about, describe, explain
- Ask student to explain similarities and differences
- Ask student to tell:
"What would happen if ...?"
"Why do you think ...?"
"What would you recommend ...?"

SPECIFIC TEACHING STRATEGIES FOR LEVELS 4 & 5:

- Continue to use designated supports for instruction, assignments, and tests, if necessary
- Check for understanding of academic vocabulary and language
- Give the student a list of target vocabulary for each unit of study
- Provide student with content and language learning objectives
- Provide targeted mini-lessons on self-editing, syntax, and word usage
- Encourage use of English-English dictionary, as well as a bilingual dictionary to expand vocabulary
- Provide explicit instruction on the use of function words (e.g. "however," "moreover," "in contrast," etc.)

LAS Links Level 4 & 5 *(Proficient & Above Proficient/ Inter. & Adv. Fluency)*

Sicola Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes



"The ELL Top 10"

Strategies for Working with English Language Learners in Mainstream Classes
(for Academic and Vocational Instructors)

1. Use **short phrases** and sentences; include "**audible punctuation**" at the end of each thought. Try not to "ramble" or "think aloud;" choose your words carefully and be **concise**.
2. **Demonstrate/model** steps of a task when possible; do not simply explain verbally.
3. **Break down a task** into steps, but do not list them all at once. Try to follow the cycle of (a) **explain** a step, (b) **demonstrate** the step, (c) **students execute** the step, (d) **evaluate** and **move on** to the next step. If necessary to give multiple steps together, give **no more than three** steps at a time.
4. Speak more **slowly** than you normally would, and **pause** frequently at natural points to allow listeners to process a phrase, concept or point before moving on. Try not to have them "just listen" for more than a few minutes at a time.
5. Speak **audibly and enunciate clearly** (no mumbling) and try to **face the students** when speaking to them, allowing them to read your facial expressions and – to some extent – your lips to help them catch the words and tone of what you are saying.
6. Use frequent **comprehension checks*** to see if students understand instructions, explanations, etc.
 - a. Have them individually or collectively repeat back to you what they remember
 - b. ask basic questions to individuals/groups soon after giving instructions e.g. "how many examples will you write in each box?" or "What do you need to do after checking the area for debris?"
7. Use **visual aids** and **graphic organizers** to represent information in a variety of ways. **Structured worksheets** (e.g. a blank flow-chart, time-line with empty points or outline with basic prompts and empty space) are helpful for students to anticipate information and take notes more successfully.
8. **Grouping options** – allow students to work in pairs or small groups
 - a. **homogeneous** (similarly-proficient students working together) to allow pairs to work at own comfort level without pressure, or
 - b. **heterogeneous** (students of different proficiency/skill levels working together) to allow stronger/more linguistically proficient students to help weaker ones
9. **Encourage ELLs to use academic/industry phrasings in their speech.** Hold ELLs to a higher academic/professional communication standard by helping them use clearer, more accurate language. Briefly rephrase their statements back to them, to model what it *should* sound like, then have them repeat it back to you once to help them internalize the pattern. It will also help them recognize those patterns when heard on the work site or seen on tests. (See "**corrective feedback**"** strategies on the next page.)
10. Try to find **alternative means** for students to demonstrate their knowledge or skill for **evaluation**. E.g. If the test requires writing a paragraph to explain a procedure, but paragraph writing is beyond their ability, let them make an ordered outline of keywords and phrases, draw a diagram, explain orally or demonstrate physically. If the test is specifically to test their paragraph writing skills, try using a simpler topic or prompt. (Be aware of the point at which a skill/content test inadvertently becomes a language test, preventing students from demonstrating their skills or knowledge!)



Additional Notes on Working with ELLs

* **Comprehension checks** – It should be noted that asking yes-or-no questions such as "Do you understand" or "Are there any questions" as comprehension checks is **not** typically a useful strategy. English Language Learners are often hesitant to admit non-comprehension, and thus will simply claim that they understand everything. Alternatively, they may *think* they understand everything, but you will soon realize where there has been a misunderstanding. As a result, **open-ended questions** that simply assume someone *does* have a question, such as "What questions do you have?" "Which part is most confusing?" or, "Who can tell me what you're going to do first?" tend to be more successful.

**Strategies for providing "Corrective Feedback" when students speak

When students say something with incorrect/non-targetlike grammar or a wrong vocabulary word, etc., you can take various steps to help them speak more accurately and clearly.

First, acknowledge the value of the content, but make a quick, simple comment to draw their attention to the error, and try to get them to repeat the phrase but using a correct form. There are several general strategies you can use, both providing the correct form for them, and prompting them to correct it for themselves. e.g.:

Form provided:

"Not 'yesterday I go,' but 'I went'. Say it again please."

"Try again – 'He *doesn't* like broccoli'." (If the student said "He don't...")

Form not provided:

"Yesterday I go?" (Emphasizing error with questioning tone)

"Yesterday I...?" (Voice trails off, indicating student should complete the phrase him/herself.)

"Remember to use the past tense." (Just reminding them of rule; let them find the error and fix it for themselves.)

The **key** is to **keep your feedback short and simple**. The more you say, the more they have to filter through and process. You are not scolding them, just casually being helpful. Try NOT to launch into grammatical (or other) lecture. Just address the issue and then move on, so as not to detour the conversation/lesson too far. **Goal: make correction a natural part of learning**, not shame, etc. It offers a good opportunity for everyone to learn, since they will all make some very common mistakes.

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

- ❖ Scaffolding
- ❖ Differentiation
- ❖ Modify assignments and assessments
- ❖ Understand the Stages of Language Acquisition (e.g., the “Silent Period”)
- ❖ Value cultural and linguistic diversity
- ❖ Create a language-rich environment
- ❖ Speak clearly and naturally (not too quickly/slowly)
- ❖ Simplify language and avoid slang and idiomatic expressions
- ❖ Encourage students to ask for help

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

Scaffolding and Differentiating

- Use visual aids (e.g., Graphic organizers, charts, pictures, and realia/objects)
- Use Total Physical Response (TPR)
- Model/Demonstrate (Verbalize thinking process, think aloud)
- Describe concept in multiple ways
- Connect to prior/background knowledge
- Break the task (e.g., Mini-lessons)

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

Instructional Tips

- Read aloud directions and test questions (Rephrase when appropriate)
- Provide word bank with visuals
- Provide sentence stems or writing frames
- Underline/highlight text (Teachers preview the materials):
 - Key terms
 - Concepts
 - Main ideas and details
 - Summaries

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

Modify Assignments/Assessments

➤ Simplifying Assignments/Assessments

- Provide only 3 choices for multiple choice questions
- Adapt the number of items to be completed (e.g., Spelling List - 5 of 10 words)
- Accept alternative responses (e.g., oral, illustration, short sentences)
- Modify scoring rubric

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

Grouping

- Encourage cooperative learning
- Prefer diverse academic abilities to support content/language learning
- Provide opportunities to interact (e.g., Paired Reading, Turn-and-Talk, Stop-Think-Share)

Strategies for ELs in Mainstream Classes

Newcomers

- Buddy System
- Student creates personal dictionary (e.g., illustration, translation)
- Teaching aids (e.g., charts, technology, online dictionary/translator)
- Columbus School Website
- Hsieh School website

Second Language Acquisition

Stage	Characteristics	Approximate Time Frame	Teacher Prompts
Preproduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has minimal comprehension. -Does not verbalize. -Nods "Yes" and "No." -Draws and points. 	0-6 months	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Show me ... -Circle the ... -Where is ...? -Who has ...?
Early Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has limited comprehension -Produces one- or two-word responses. -Uses key words and familiar phrases. -Uses present-tense verbs. 	6 months - 1 year	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Yes/no questions -Either/or questions -Who ...? -What ...? -How many ...?
Speech Emergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has good comprehension. -Can produce simple sentences. -Makes grammar and pronunciation errors. -Frequently misunderstands jokes. 	1-3 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Why ...? -How ...? -Explain ... -Questions requiring phrase or short-sentence answers
Intermediate Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Has excellent comprehension. -Makes few grammatical errors. 	3-5 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -What would happen if ...? -Why do you think ...? -Questions requiring more than a sentence response
Advanced Fluency	has a near-native level of speech.	5-7 years	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Decide if ... -Retell ...

Chapter 2. The Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners Facilitator's Guide

by **Jane D. Hill** and **Cynthia L. Björk**

<http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/108052/chapters/The-Stages-of-Second-Language-Acquisition.aspx>