

50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners

Adrienne L. Herrell & Michael Jordan, 3rd ed. (2008)

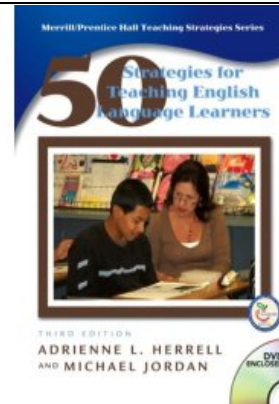
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50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners, 3rd Ed. (2008) presents specific methods by which classroom teachers can assist and scaffold lessons for English Language Learners (ELL). Unlike most texts directed at ELLs that include a plethora of theoretical discussions, this book supplies realistic examples of how to make progress in a variety of areas including: planning, student involvement, building vocabulary and fluency, and building comprehension—each with its own section in increasing difficulty that adds to its introductory theoretical overview. With an instructional DVD that demonstrates these strategies being utilized in classroom settings, the manuscript is geared towards anyone interested in developing students' levels of English language acquisition, including undergraduate pre-service teachers, classroom teachers, reading specialists, and university faculty. With an ever-increasing ELL population, this textbook is far more applicable today than ever.

Section I discusses the theoretical underpinnings of how ELL instruction is moving from being highly teacher-directed with a focus on product and performance measurements to that which is student-involved, process-oriented, and one that remains flexible to students' needs. Stressing informal assessments like portfolios and recognizing students' competencies rather than just focusing on 'what they can't do' is imperative for success with ELLs. The base of all instruction should revolve around taking the knowledge with which these students come to school and expanding those understandings through modeling and providing opportunities to interact with information and other students.

Section II examines strategies for enhancing one's curricular planning. Preparing visual and realistic examples for students to see and manipulate firsthand allows that information to be understood more readily, as multisensory instruction is extremely effective. Realia, visuals, and even activities can support students in their reading development, utilizing neurological impress to add language acquisition to their schemas. Story maps, props, voices, dresswear, manipulatives, and gestures are just some of the methods by which the authors suggest to turn class into a true experience so learning can occur. Verbal interaction should also be a focus within curricular planning for ELLs (Canagarajah, 2006).

Section III includes strategies for supporting active student involvement. Kinesthetic responses can be learned through approaches as easy as the 'Simon Says' game, allowing students to

understand what their teachers want and move towards meeting those expectations. For example, cooperative learning is another central theme among most of the strategies suggested in this text. In learning centers, students can participate in jigsawing, role playing, buddy reading, and even think-pair-sharing. Although some of these suggestions are not innovative, they are truly difference makers when combined with direct teacher modeling. Allowing ELL students to practice these techniques and strategies in differing contexts is critical towards mastery level acquisition, as learning new ideas in a second language is inevitably more challenging than in one's first language.

Leveled questioning (i.e. using Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives) is another element by which teachers can advance ELLs to higher levels of attainment. The authors suggest that specific questions require students to think, develop ideas from accessing prior knowledge, and demonstrate verbally that understanding. This is counter to questions that would only require a yes or no response, which do not always accurately assess a student's understanding or lack thereof.

Section IV explains how teachers can build vocabulary and fluency of ELLs in and outside of reading class. Again, physicality is a predominate notion behind many of the strategies suggested like 'Showing While You Talk,' 'Building Vocabulary Through Dramatization,' and 'Practicing Verbal Interactions.' Getting involved and participating are often necessary for English Language Learners to make lasting connections with topics and increase fluency in a secondary language. Labeling environmental items and using bilingual texts in the classroom when possible substantially increase students' word knowledge and vocabulary acquisition.

Being clear and specific both in oral and written directions is an obvious but often neglected aspect of effective ELL classroom instruction. Sometimes, students will not completely understand what is expected of them and thus, perform poorly on the task. However, these instances can be minimized if one takes the time to use a dual-method (giving oral and written directions) in stating those expectations. Including hands-on, interdisciplinary projects from early elementary grades like sorting objects according to ending sounds through secondary school like sorting rock samples according to classifications allows ELLs to make real-world connections with content material.

Section V justifies using materials outside the textbook to teach content at every level of education. Often, content texts like those in science and social studies are written two grade levels above the level in which those books are used in school (Cheek, 1983). It spells disaster within ELL classrooms that solely use these texts. So as to avoid those scenarios, Herrell and Jordan (2008) recommend gathering a variety of books so students will be successful in locating information. Then, students can use that gathered data to create charts that promote their visual learning. Innovative technology applications can also supplement students' learning; it is never too early to begin integrating multimedia into the curriculum. It is the universal learning tool that is crucial to everyone's development in the 21st century.

Comprehension techniques like role-playing and reciprocal teaching allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, rather than determining what they know based on predetermined questions. Still, teachers should use prompts for clarification during assessment. Once

assessments are issued, specific types of remediation are suggested for certain reading problems like insufficient background, unfamiliar vocabulary, and reading past miscues without self-correcting. These skills are to be taught directly so that students can monitor their reading for understanding.

50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners, 3rd Ed. (2008) is a tremendously resourceful tool for inquirers and teachers alike interested in developing their instructional abilities for English Language Learners. As the need for continuing research in the area of ELL increases, this text will serve to supplement every teacher's toolbox. These authors provide valuable accounts and video documentation of effective techniques proven to be successful in ELL classrooms. Through implementing some of these ideas, teachers can give meaningful opportunities for ELLs to have lasting success in school and beyond.

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