

Introduction

Principal Finney dropped a pile of folders on the conference table and made eye contact with each teacher who was present for the mandatory meeting. The media center was at capacity, with most teachers seated together by grade and a few others standing alone, out of Mr. Finney's line of vision.

"We have some new data to discuss today," he said as he put on his reading glasses and opened the first folder. "Our learning gains did not hit our target. We're not too far off overall, but one group of students is underperforming." Teachers at the third-grade table looked up nervously. "Our English learners made negligible gains, well below expectations." A few heads turned toward the English language development teachers.

"We've been depending on our ELD teachers to address all of our English learners' needs, but the time has come for *all of us* to take responsibility for these students' achievement. I want *every* teacher who has one or more English learners to document the ELD strategies that they are using." He opened another folder and motioned to two nearby teachers to hand out the stack of papers.

The teachers at the kindergarten table looked over the handout, a page filled from edge to edge with "ELD Strategies." Number 3—Allow more time, Number 57—Scaffold writing assignments, Number 80—Use visuals. They all looked very familiar.

"The district has compiled this numbered list of strategies to make it easy for you to document what you're doing for your English learners. In your planner, make sure to include the number of the strategy you use for each lesson. As we focus on increasing our English learners' gains, I ask you to do all you can to use more district-approved strategies, and to use them more often. We need to see improvement, and we need it now."

"I think we are using most of these strategies already," a seasoned teacher asserted. "There are only a couple that I don't recognize."

Mr. Finney replied, "Good, then just do more of what you've been doing and document it. And if there are any strategies that you don't know, I'm sure our ELD teachers will be glad to answer your questions."

Many teachers in the room felt burdened by the latest obligation added to the school day, but nearly everyone agreed they had to do more to help their English learners succeed. Mr. Finney knew that his teachers' plates were more than full, but he felt reassured that they were already using many of the strategies. This new plan would require extra planning and documentation, but it would lead to better outcomes for their English learners, he reasoned. What he didn't realize was how unlikely it was that this additional effort would make any difference at all.

Mr. Finney’s approach is a common response to a nationwide concern—the achievement gap of English learners (ELs). When educators determine that English learners in their districts and schools are not meeting expectations, they typically view teachers as first responders. And often they surmise that requiring teachers to do more, or to do something different, will lead to the needed improvements. The trouble is that the required changes may not address what teachers need to know and do to support their English learners’ success in school. We believe that using and documenting so-called ELD (or ESOL) strategies often misses the mark.

WHAT’S WRONG WITH USING ELD (OR ESOL) STRATEGIES?

There is nothing inherently wrong with consulting a list of suggested strategies when planning lessons in an EL-integrated classroom. The problem is that choosing a strategy that might be familiar because of its applicability to all students won’t necessarily provide the support that English learners at different levels of English proficiency need. In other words, using a blanket approach to “EL-friendly” instructional practices is a hit-or-miss proposition in the EL-integrated classroom. We can, and must, be more deliberate than that.

So, how do we address more precisely the specific needs and varied backgrounds of English learners, including:

- Current levels of English proficiency (both oral language and literacy skills)
- Current age/grade level (and age of first exposure to English)
- Literacy in the first language (Can their first language literacy support their learning in a second language?)
- First language and its features (e.g., Does it have cognates with English? Does it have a similar word order?)
- Previous education in or outside of the United States (Are there knowledge gaps?)
- Cultural and experiential background (Are the students and families familiar with US customs and cultures?)

If we are going to adhere to any list to meet EL students’ needs, the above six characteristics about each English learner should be the one. And once we know our EL students, we can be deliberate in which instructional approaches and supports we use because we will know why they work for their specific needs.

A DIFFERENT APPROACH

Now, you might have gathered that we don’t use the “S” word (strategies), and that’s because we believe the word is used so broadly that it has lost its meaning. Instead, we refer to effective instructional practices for English learners as tools (what teachers and students use) and techniques (what teachers and students do and say) that provide communication support for ELs through showing and telling and that

develop their language proficiency through building their skills; hence the title *Show, Tell, Build*.

This book is built upon the theoretical and practical foundation laid out in our previous book, *Educating English Learners: What Every Classroom Teacher Needs to Know*.¹ In *Show, Tell, Build* we focus on the instructional tools and techniques that teachers can use to support ELs' learning and to target language development instruction to their needs. The power to reach ELs where they are is not in the tools and techniques per se, but in *how* they are used for different levels and purposes.

In *Educating English Learners*, we compiled the most essential information that teachers in EL-integrated classrooms need to know to be able to support English learners' achievement in academic subjects and English language development. Organized around four English learners at different English proficiency levels in kindergarten, fourth, seventh, and tenth grades, *Educating English Learners* put second language acquisition theory and second language instructional practices into a familiar context for classroom teachers and addressed English learner challenges and attributes in concrete, realistic ways. Part I of the book discussed the theory and practice behind our approach to teaching academic subjects to English learners, and Part II highlighted the same for teaching language arts. All of the theory and practice was presented through the lens of the four case study students and how their teachers addressed their needs in different subjects and language domains. After conducting book studies with teachers and administrators at many schools, our team heard their main request loudly and clearly—they love the four EL students and the practical guidance for meeting their needs, and they want more nuts-and-bolts directions focused on exactly *what* they should do for their own EL students and *how* they should do it in their EL-integrated classrooms. *Show, Tell, Build* is the answer to this request.

THE ACADEMIC SUBJECTS AND LANGUAGE ARTS PROTOCOLS

To help classroom teachers juggle and balance the needs of native English speakers alongside those of English learners, we developed two decision maps to plan and implement differentiated instruction for English learners, the Academic Subjects Protocol (ASP) and the Language Arts Protocol (LAP). The ASP and LAP were developed for the classroom teacher and collaborators to provide *accessible, targeted* instruction for ELs *within the context* of the EL-integrated classroom.²

After working with teachers of English learners for over twenty-five years, we created the two protocols to help teachers address English learners' needs in classrooms that include a mix of non-English learners (sometimes referred to as native speakers and/or former English learners) and English learners. We refer to this type of class as the EL-integrated classroom, or what some call mainstream or general classrooms. There are many good books and resources that explain how to teach English learners, but most of them do not fully explain how this can be done in classrooms with a majority of non-ELs. This is a challenge for teachers. The two protocols we created serve as an *overlay* to planning grade-level instruction in academic subjects (e.g., science, social

studies, mathematics, etc.) and language arts (e.g., listening, speaking, reading, writing, and language conventions) that brings the needs of English learners at different proficiency levels into sharp focus and leads teachers in providing appropriate support and targeted instruction given the resources they have in their classrooms and schools.

Categorizing the protocols into academic subjects and language arts instruction does not mean that we consider the two areas as independent and separate. Indeed, we assert that language learning is part of academic subject learning, and vice versa. However, in academic subject instruction, the main goal is to learn the topics, concepts, and skills of the subject area. Learning the language of the discipline is essential, but not the main focus. In fact, in many cases with English learners, the language used in teaching and learning about academic subjects (learning through language)³ can be a barrier to understanding the new content, so the Academic Subjects Protocol helps lower the language barrier while also helping EL students to rise above it. Our aim for academic subject teachers is to foster classroom communication (communication *for*, *between*, and *of* English learners) that reaches English learners at different proficiency levels (in academic subject instruction we suggest differentiating communication support for three levels of English proficiency—beginning, intermediate, and advanced).

The situation is parallel for language arts, or English language development (ELD) instruction, where learning language and learning about language is the main focus or point of instruction, and academic subject information may be the type of language that is being used during instruction. The point of language arts instruction, however, is not to teach a new concept in the academic subject through language, but rather to develop ELs' skills in listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It is this distinction in focus that defines the Language Arts Protocol's use, as well as our view that academic subject teachers who do not typically have extensive preparation in teaching language arts (e.g., secondary mathematics teachers) can do a lot to move EL students past language barriers, but it takes teachers with strong preparation in teaching language and literacy to adapt language and literacy instruction to meet the English language development needs of ELs at different proficiency levels (what we call *targeted language instruction* for ELs).⁴ Our aim for language and literacy teachers is to target listening, speaking, reading, and writing instruction to ELs at their specific level of proficiency in each domain, which occurs by adjusting language and instructional features (what we call the four Ps of targeted language instruction—pitch, pace, portion, and perspective⁵). Because language development is sequential and incremental, we also suggest differentiating language and literacy instruction for six levels of English proficiency—WIDA levels Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging, and Reaching.⁶ This is a more complex type of differentiation than is necessary, for example, to make physics instruction accessible to English learners.

The tools and techniques presented in *Show, Tell, Build* are the substance of the ASP and LAP—they make academic subject instruction accessible, and they target English language development to specific proficiency levels of English learners. The ASP and LAP help classroom teachers and their collaborators to know which tools and techniques their ELs need and to plan how, when, and with whom to implement them.

In this book, the ASP is described in the introduction to part I, The Academic Subjects Protocol, and the LAP is explained in the introduction to part II, The Language Arts Protocol.

English learners need support throughout instruction and assessment in academic subjects and/or language arts, and in our experience the twenty tools and techniques in this book are excellent ways to provide it. We have field tested these tools and techniques in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms; with classroom teachers and ELD specialists; and for English learners from all backgrounds and levels of English proficiency. Our goal was to choose tools and techniques that work well in the EL-integrated classroom and to clearly lay out the steps of using each one for a variety of student needs and subject-matter demands. Assuming that the reader has little or no formal preparation in teaching ELs in the integrated classroom, we guide classroom teachers to use tools and techniques that experienced ELD teachers use, but within the context of the integrated classroom, in a collaborative school environment.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Show, Tell, Build is divided into two major sections: part I, which includes ten *Show* and *Tell* tools and techniques, and part II, which includes ten *Build* tools and techniques. *Show* and *Tell* refer to the two types of communication support, nonverbal and verbal, that are key to the Academic Subjects Protocol. *Build* refers to English language development, targeted to English learners' oral proficiency and literacy levels, which is the basis of the Language Arts Protocol.

Part I begins with an overview of the Academic Subjects Protocol, concisely discussing the major factors involved in teaching academic subjects to English learners. Following this overview of the ASP are descriptions of and instructions for using the four *Show* and six *Tell* tools and techniques. As with part I, part II starts by laying out the elements of the Language Arts Protocol, highlighting key elements in teaching language arts and literacy to English learners. The descriptions and instructions for the ten *Build* tools and techniques are categorized by which of the four language domains—listening, speaking, reading, or writing—is the primary focus.

This grouping of tools and techniques recognizes that their purpose for use is critical. Graphic organizers, for example, are presented in three different chapters because they are used differently to make key points of academic subject lessons comprehensible to ELs, to help ELs understand the structure of various types of text, and to organize ELs' main points and details for different types of essay writing.

We address each tool or technique separately to present not only its general features but also how it is used with English learners. Even if experienced teachers think they know the tool or technique already, what is presented here *will look different* because of its purpose for use and the way it is implemented.

Although we isolate twenty tools and techniques, our intention is for them to be used together. This can be done through what we term layering or sequencing. *Layering* involves using more than one tool and technique at the same time, depending on

the English learners' level of proficiency, such as when a teacher uses diagrams, hands-on materials, and physical movement concurrently to demonstrate a concept. *Sequencing* indicates moving from one tool and technique to another, and sometimes back and forth, in a dynamic series of interactions with students, such as when a teacher responds to student writing by using leveled questioning and sentence framing to elicit the correct grammatical form from the student. These instructional practices will be discussed in more detail in each section.

Each tool and technique chapter can be consulted on an as-needed basis, like an instruction manual. However, the best way to get the most from this book is to read the appropriate introductory sections (the ASP and LAP descriptions) before reading a specific tool or technique. These introductory sections set the context for using the tools and techniques, and that is what is most different about using them with English learners versus other students. There is no specific order to reading each tool and technique, and it isn't necessary to read all of them to be able to use any one of them.

In the "Conclusion: Tools and Techniques in Practice," we provide suggestions on how to get started using the tools and techniques, combining them as needed and working with others at your school or independently as circumstances dictate. There are two appendices with crucial information: appendix A describes academic language in instruction and assessment and its challenges for ELs, and appendix B explains English proficiency levels and formal and informal ways to assess them and set goals to increase them.

To provide regularly updated resources for each chapter, we maintain a website, englishlearnerachievement.com. Click on the *Show, Tell, Build* cover to access links for the Additional Information and Resources presented at the end of the chapters 1–20 as well as additional, newly available resources and information.

We believe this book will help classroom teachers expand their teaching toolbox and develop a bigger repertoire of instructional techniques for the benefit of their English learners. We also believe that other educators, such as ELD specialists, bilingual paraprofessionals, literacy coaches, and school leaders, will gain valuable knowledge and skills to support ELs' academic success. We hope that reading and following the instructions in *Show, Tell, Build* will be an enjoyable and successful experience for all.