

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

The Big Book of Tasks for English Language Development, Grades K-8 by Nancy Akhavan is a clear and useful text for teachers new to instructing English learners. Pre-service and early career teachers who are learning about how to structure lessons will find solid advice and guidance. The book is organized into sections that align with the WIDA proficiency levels: entering, emerging, developing, and bridging. In each section, Akhavan explains multiple strategies that are appropriate for each proficiency level. She also includes “Watch for and work arounds” so teachers can anticipate how students might react or engage in the lesson. I have taught many pre-service teachers about these activities; this text would be a valuable addition to a syllabus on teaching primary and intermediate literacy. In a classroom setting, this text will provide research-based, effective strategies that can be implemented during intervention blocks or during embedded Tier 1 ESL.

—**Sara Hamerla, EdD**

Administrator, Multilingual Department
Waltham Public Schools and Visiting Lecturer
Education Department
Framingham State University

Teachers understand the *why* behind the importance of designated English language development but often struggle with *how* and *what* to do. This book identifies how to effectively utilize designated ELD time, create a safe learning environment, and build confidence in a new language. Teachers get the *what* in a bank of lessons designed with rigor and appropriate scaffolds they can count on to meet the needs of English language learners.

—**Amy Williams, EdD**

Program Manager
California Education Partners

The Big Book of Tasks for English Language Development, Grades K-8 is an amazing resource for educators. It brings a wide range of research on language development together in a user-friendly practical guide. Aligning effective practices and strategies with language performance levels will give educators a clear direction and pathway to support all language learners at an appropriate level.

—**Cari Carlson**

Assistant Superintendent of Learning Services

This book is an amazing resource for any teacher who supports English learners! It is a teacher-friendly guide full of practical tips and strategies that reinforce great pedagogy and solid teaching practices. I highly recommend principals to provide this great tool for their teachers as a planning support and a great professional reference. As an EL myself and bilingual teacher of several years, I wish I would have had this reference to guide my lesson planning—it would have saved me time and made my job so much easier. Thank you, Nancy Akhavan for providing teachers with such a great resource.

—**Janie Sifuentes-De La Cerda**

Elementary ELA Manager-Fresno Unified School District
Fresno, CA

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The Big Book of Tasks for English Language Development, Grades K-8

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Dedication

*To my father and mother Bob and Charlotte Pritz, who passed in 2021 and 2022.
I am raising a glass of champagne to you, just as you always did for me on
special occasions. This book is for you. Thank you for teaching me to
appreciate and love the diversity of life, and the discovery of ideas.*

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The Big Book of Tasks for English Language Development, Grades K-8

Lessons and Activities That
Invite Learners to Read, Write,
Speak, and Listen

Nancy Akhavan

CORWIN Literacy

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For downloadable resources, please visit the companion website:
resources.corwin.com/bigbookELD

This Book at a Glance

In this book, I focus on engaging tasks that support students' developing language proficiency. Each one is designed to streamline your teaching—and provide opportunities for students to produce language and communicate, both orally and in writing. The overarching principle is that students need to communicate messages, ideas, and information as much as they are receiving messages, ideas, and information. That's the surest way for them to develop fluency with the English language. I've laid out each task with the following features to make it easy for you to use the book as you are actually teaching.

2 Picture Retelling

Listening

WHEN YOU MIGHT OFFER IT
When students are able to understand the gist of a story read aloud.

TARGET
Students can put pictures in order after listening to a story read aloud.

Inviting students to retell a story you have read aloud to them is a powerful way to develop learners' listening comprehension. The routine also helps them understand story structure. Since students new to English are often not speaking in school, they need alternative ways to retell a story. They can point to pictures to put them in order, or they can manipulate the pictures themselves.

Your Instructions

Materials: Simple picture books – photocopy the picture pages and/or cut out images from the beginning, middle, and end of the book. You don't need to copy every page—just the big events that depict the beginning, middle, and resolution. A well-known story like “The Three Little Pigs” is a good introductory one or any narrative with a simple plot.

Name It: Today we are going to retell a story aloud. You are going to use pictures to retell the story. I have pictures that students can connect to what you are saying.

What You Might Say Next: “When we retell stories, we think about what we understand. We think about the characters and what happens. Often, they have a problem they have to solve. We don't say everything about the story, but the most important parts. We think of what happened in the beginning of the story, what happened in the middle, and at the end of the story. I have pictures read aloud. This is the story I am going to read today.” (Point or hold up the pictures/book so students can make connections to what you are saying.)

The little girl went into the treehouse.	She called for her brother to come up.
He was too small to climb the rope.	The little boy cried.

This feature helps you know when students are ready for it.

Tie the target goal to your standards and your success criteria.

A light introduction to inform students, but notice how brief it is. We want to move right into the action of the task.

I give you the basics for launching the task.

The explicitly stated purpose—so important for students to hear!

A light appetizer to inform students, but notice how brief it is. We want to move right into the action of the task.

Ideas for how to demonstrate and also involve students—I purposely didn't script it in full because it's best if the words come from you!

Model/Do Together: Read the story aloud, stopping often to restate what is happening in the story, using simple language that summarizes the setting, characters, conflict, and action. Point to pictures as you go. After you are done reading and using the pictures you have cut out, ask students to help you retell. Support students by providing a list of words and phrases to use out of sequence by using the pictures.

Release: Once students are comfortable with the story, have them work with a partner to retell the story.

Ideas for students doing the doing! Having students communicate ideas, information, and thoughts is the heart of the tasks.

Watch Fors and Work-Arounds

Students may use a mix of their heritage language and English to retell or may speak only English. Students are often more comfortable expressing their understanding in their heritage language. In this context, it is natural. If students are more comfortable with their heritage language skills in English, they may struggle to express their understanding. In my experience, they earnestly want to share their thoughts accurately, so it makes sense they would rely on their heritage language to ensure they are doing so. Encourage students to use the language they have to work on retelling the stories. Asking students to only speak English will not help them acquire English. It raises negative emotions and shuts down students' desire to participate.

Ideas for support and differentiating when students need your coaching in the midst of or after completing a task.

The Research Support for the Tasks

There is substantive research serving as the foundation for the tasks in this book. Each task incorporates the best learning from research on language acquisition. In that fashion the tasks focus on the four modes—listening, speaking, reading, and writing—and spiral the expectations. (See Appendix A for a full listing of the research that backs each task in the book.)

You will notice that the tasks begin with lots of oral language development through listening, adding in speaking opportunities, and then including modeled writing and shared reading. As the oral language develops into academic contexts, the reading experiences are shared reading and read-alouds; the writing is shared writing and independent writing. As students move to the bridging stage of English language proficiency, the tasks focus more on independent work with the oral language involving lots of partner work and listening to academic information presented orally or visually in video. Of course, students at this point are reading independently, working with partners, and writing extensive pieces.

In the chart that follows, you will see the levels addressed in this book, and how the tasks involve listening, speaking, reading, and writing in ways that support students' developing proficiency.

Stage of language proficiency	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Entering and Emerging	With visuals, realia, and TPR for comprehensible input. Partnering with other heritage language speakers.	Not expected, but choral response is encouraged	"Shared" in the sense that students can scan the text and look at pictures	Modeled, drawing, labeling
Developing	With visuals, sentence frames, gestures, and lessons broken into smaller chunks of information for comprehensible input. Partnering with other heritage language speakers.	One or two words Short phrases	Shared reading Read aloud	Modeled, guided
Expanding	Academic content with comprehensible input.	Scaffolded and support	Shared, read aloud, independent	Guided, independent
Bridging	Academic content with less comprehensible input.	Independent, collaborative, and partner	Independent	Independent

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About the Author



Nancy Akhavan is an independent consultant and author. She previously was an associate professor in the Department of Educational Leadership at Fresno State University. She has held various positions as teacher, principal, and district office leader. She has led literacy programs for schools, grades K–12, for over thirty-five years. She currently consults with teachers, as well as district and school leaders, to implement effective reading and writing instruction to close equity gaps and provide support for all students to have all possible opportunities. Nancy is the author of thirteen professional books including *Small Group Reading With Multilingual Learners* (Corwin, 2023) and *The Big Book of Literacy Tasks: 75 Balanced Literacy Activities Students Do (Not You!), Grades K–8* (Corwin, 2018).

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Introduction

This book you hold in your hand, *The Big Book of Tasks for English Language Development, Grades K–8* is a sequel to *The Big Book of Literacy Tasks* (Corwin), which was published in 2018. In the six years since then, as I traveled the United States and abroad working with schools, the question kept coming up: “Would you write a book like this one for multilingual learners?”

The answer is yes. And here it is.

I have an extensive background in English Language Development, and so this resource has long been on my mind and in my heart. As a California-based educator, it’s in my professional DNA to design research-based teaching and learning for highly diverse student populations. Students acquiring English are not faring well in our classrooms. For example, 80 percent of Latinx students are not reading on grade level in fourth grade (NCES, 2022). According to the US Department of Education (2022), 75.9 percent of multilingual learners speak Spanish as their heritage language. While Latinx students make up most of the multilingual learner population in the US, it’s more productive to acknowledge that English language learners across the board are struggling academically and linguistically. So, what do we do about it?

The short answer—and an uplifting one—is that multilingual learners need access to the same dynamic instruction that all students do. You teachers do an amazing job, and what I hope this book reminds you is: *You got this.*

Supporting multilingual learners is a matter of changing our instruction so it focuses on practices that have high impact for students as they acquire language. It’s not about doing more—it’s about doing smarter. It’s about supporting students to feel confident in their abilities to communicate and engage with peers and you!

In this book, I focus on teaching English language development. This is a book on teaching multilingual students so that they can acquire English. I stress this point at the outset because English Language Development (ELD) that is designated instruction is strikingly different than the teaching we provide multilingual students alongside students whose first language is English in integrated learning situations. Students acquiring English should receive both integrated and designated English language development. Edelman et al. (2022) found in their research that students receiving thirty minutes of designated ELD at each grade level scored similarly to students who speak English as their heritage language by third grade as measured by English language knowledge assessments. As I wrote about in my book on teaching multilingual students to read, *Small Group Reading With Multilingual Learners: Differentiating Instruction in 20 minutes a Day* (2023), ELD is specially designed instruction to help students increase their language acquisition in English (Wright, 2019).



Multilingual learners need access to the same dynamic instruction that all students do.

An Important Note About Terms in This Book

I want to speak also about the terms I use. In my previous book I used the term *multilingual learner* to note the students in classrooms that are acquiring English as an additional language and that students communicate in multiple ways through multiple languages and literacies. In this book, I chose to use the older term *English learner*. I made this choice because I am sharing information about the teaching of English to students for whom English is not their heritage language. While some argue that the term is laden with non-asset-based connotations, I want to be clear about the reason for my choice. I often hear, “ELD is good for all students.” But ELD is specific and substantially different than teaching academic language development to students whose heritage language is English (Wright, 2019; Bialik et al., 2018).

In ELD, we provide a safe space for students acquiring English to explore language and communication without judgment, without rebuke, without the pressure that they may experience to listen, speak, read, or write when in groups with students whose heritage language is English. ELD is designed just for students acquiring English. All students have rich assets that they bring to the classroom, and when we have English learners in our classrooms, we have an opportunity to learn from them about their lives, their experiences, and about their heritage language. Students acquiring English are assets—their knowledge and lived experiences can enrich the lives of all people in our schools and classrooms. So, why do I choose to use the term *English learner* in this book? It’s because the term is embedded in the term *ELD: English language, English learner*.

There are four key principles to keep in mind as you try these tasks. The common thread? Clear expectations! The biggest barrier to multilingual learners’ achievement is the education system’s tendency to lower expectations for these students. “Lower” books, “lower groups,” “lower tasks.” The sixty tasks in this book expect the most from every child *and* provide the extra scaffolds students acquiring English need to succeed. We don’t lower expectations, ever. We provide specifically designed instruction and activities during a lesson (thirty-minute minimum daily) so learners have access to learning about how to communicate, learn, and become knowledgeable in English and also learn how English works.

Principle 1: Multilingual Students Need Active Learning



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All students need purposeful, active tasks where they are doing the cognitive lift during the lessons, not you. The teacher's role is to facilitate the work for students, not do it for them. Too often, we go home at the end of the day more tired than the students because we do so much, and we don't release often enough (with scaffolding) to ensure students are doing the doing. We do this because we want our students to be successful, but if we over-support and over-scaffold, we can undermine our best efforts to ensure student independence (Ellis & Shintani, 2013).

In *The Big Book of Literacy Tasks*, I wrote that engaging tasks are at the center of the classroom dynamics and day-to-day routines. Additionally, I said that these tasks are the glue that connects teachers and students. I still believe this to be true. Active tasks engage readers cognitively and help them become independent, strong learners. The tasks in this book are no different, except that we are focused on helping students acquire an additional language.

When teachers invite me in to watch them teach, they ask me to help them know when the tasks they are doing aren't active. In giving them feedback, one thing I say is that active and passive tasks look different when we notice what the student is doing during the lesson. During active tasks, students are owning the cognitive lift—essentially doing the thinking and the work. That is why during great tasks students are stretched, just a bit, to try something new. Active tasks involve the students answering the questions (asking the questions also), discussing, and writing. Active tasks have a signature style, as shown in the chart that follows.



If we over-support, and over-scaffold, we can undermine our best efforts to ensure student independence.

Active Task Signature Style	Passive Tasks
Students think about what they want to say and express themselves as best as they can.	Students sit and listen while the teacher does all or most of the talking and thinking (it's ok for students to listen, just not <i>all</i> of the time).
Students talk with a partner or with the group about their thinking.	Students sit quietly while the teacher calls on one student at a time to share their thinking (the problem is that only one student is active and the remainder of the class is <i>honestly</i> , not probably listening attentively).
Students read with a partner or on their own.	Students wait for the teacher to read everything aloud (read-alouds are a fabulous way to teach language; it's just that we cannot do them <i>all</i> of the time).
Students are invited to think about what is important in what they heard or read.	Students wait for the teacher to tell them what was important.
Students write their own thinking down, or write narratives, opinions, and informational essays or reports (even if they need to draw lots of pictures to support themselves).	Students copy what the teacher wrote.

Notice how in the active tasks students are doing the thinking, talking, reading, and writing. In the passive tasks, students are overly supported by the teacher. In the tasks in this book, students will be guided to do the work in any way they can as it is through supported practice that students acquire language and develop skills (Genesee et al., 2005).

Principle 2: Language Develops on a Continuum



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Multilingual students progress along a predictable continuum of stages of English language proficiency. As the teacher, you are mindful of these stages. You use your awareness of each child's current stage to plan, implement, and adjust lessons. Students acquire language in a predictable flow. The flow is a continuum rather than movement through discrete stages. Although your local or state assessments might label students as being at a particular "stage" or "level" of language acquisition at a given time, students' language proficiency is continually evolving across the four domains (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). For example, a student may have more proficiency in speaking and listening than reading or writing, or vice versa (Cloud et al., 2009).

Six Levels of Language Proficiency



The stages along this continuum include entering, emerging, developing, expanding, bridging, and reaching.

Students move along this continuum from speaking their heritage language(s) to emerging as a multilingual student by adding one or more languages and then becoming more and more fluent in both languages (Gottlieb, 2016; Wright, 2019). A body of work by an organization called WIDA has developed a continuum of language proficiency descriptors, which help us to understand what students may be able to do during instruction. WIDA uses six levels to describe language proficiency: **entering**, **emerging**, **developing**, **expanding**, **bridging**, and **reaching** (Kohnert & Pham, 2010; Wright, 2019). While the labels for the stages may vary slightly in different states, countries, or districts, these are the labels used most in theory and in practice.

Keep in mind: The labels are not as important as understanding what a student "can do." Knowing what students can do affords you the opportunity to create experiences so students can successfully participate in lessons. In each section of this book the section opener will provide an overview of the level of English language proficiency.

The descriptors I use in the tables at the beginning of each section are the descriptors that cut across the terms used in different states across the US. They don't match exactly any one document. I do this purposefully in order for the terms to be as familiar as possible for those of us working in states who use similar, but not exact, terms as the WIDA framework uses. In my view, "levels," "stages," and "phases" are interchangeable labels. The labels don't matter. The students do.


Activate the Domains of Language

This continuum integrates the four domains of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The four domains, also known as modes, do not develop at the same rate (Gibbons, 2015). Therefore, students are at different places on the continuum of development of each language mode at any given time.

Listening and reading are receptive modes and speaking and writing are productive modes; in other words, students are producing language when they are speaking and writing. For instance, students will understand more of what is said than what they can say, and students will be able to say more than they can read or write until they reach fluency in all four modes.

Now, let's look at the characteristics of each stage in the chart that follows.

I've organized this book into sections of tasks that are particularly apt for these levels, but always remember to let your students be your guide. They may have skills that overlap the levels, and you will be the best judge of what they are ready for. By the time students are in the reaching level, they are thriving with the English language and beyond the tasks in this book!



Students are in different places on the continuum of development of each language mode at any given time.

The Continuum of Language Development

Entering	
Level Characteristics	What Students Can Do
<p>Students at the entering level have minimal comprehension of what is being said in English.</p> <p>Students will not be speaking much or often.</p> <p>Students' receptive modes are still developing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate through pointing, gestures, and drawing. • Find or point to familiar objects, items, or people that are named orally for them. • Repeat simple phrases and words in unison with others. • Orally name objects they see. • State personal likes and dislikes using pictures to help them.

(Continued)

(Continued)

Emerging

Level Characteristics

Students at the emerging stage are beginning to use language, in particular, their listening and speaking abilities.

Students at this stage have limited comprehension of what is said, at first.

What Students Can Do

- Speak in one- to two-word phrases; respond with familiar phrases and use key words.
- Form sentences using present tense verbs. Restate some language associated with texts and short stories.
- Categorize and label.
- Connect oral language to print.
- State their preferences in one or two words. Participate in social interactions with peers, perhaps using both their heritage language and English, or by gesturing.

Developing

Level Characteristics

Students at the developing stage of proficiency will speak in short sentences and begin to communicate more often socially. Students will be able to connect causal- or content-related relationships in texts together.

Students' use of verb tenses is expanding and they are beginning to learn irregular conjugations.

Students will know that different words are used to express similar ideas and they will expand in their vocabularies both socially and with academic language.

What Students Can Do

- Follow sequential directions one step at a time. Begin to write using sentence starters and drawings.
- Respond orally to show agreement or disagreement and state personal opinions.
- Communicate orally about content and give oral reports on content.
- Write statements about books read and connect ideas together.
- Make frequent grammatical and pronunciation errors.
- Identify details and key ideas in texts and make simple comparisons about text and story elements.

Expanding

Level Characteristics

At the expanding stage, students' language proficiency is expanding beyond social language use and beginning to use language for academic purposes.

Students at this level need to be challenged to increase their English skills in more contexts and learn a greater variety of vocabulary and linguistic structures.

What Students Can Do

- Compare story elements.
- Propose ideas to contribute to conversations.
- Have good comprehension of social conversations, but they will not have complete comprehension of academic conversations.
- Use technical and specific vocabulary.

(Continued)

Expanding	
Level Characteristics	What Students Can Do
Students apply their language skills in more sophisticated ways; students can produce statements about texts, convey their opinions, and explain information and ideas. Academic conversations will need to be scaffolded.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify multiple sources for ideas and information.• Will still make some errors in grammar and pronunciation.
Bridging	
Level Characteristics	What Students Can Do
<p>Students at this level continue to learn and apply a range of higher-level English language skills in a variety of contexts, including comprehension of and production of academic texts.</p> <p>Students will make fewer grammatical and pronunciation errors but will still need academic language and tasks to be scaffolded.</p> <p>Students continue to need contextualized academic tasks.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate texts and books, including story and text elements, and other literary elements and nonfiction text topics.• Describe how factors relate in texts and lead to outcomes.• Understand and use increasingly difficult academic vocabulary as they read texts that are comprehensible through the use of diagrams, pictures, and rich descriptions.• Support claims with evidence from various sources and use claims and evidence to argue and persuade.
Reaching	
<i>(Note: This level is not addressed in this book, as students are proficient enough they don't need dedicated language development instruction.)</i>	
Level Characteristics	What Students Can Do
<p>Students at the level of reaching proficiency continue to learn and apply a range of high-level English language skills in a wide variety of contexts, including comprehension of and production of highly technical texts.</p> <p>They need far less contextualization of texts and ideas.</p> <p>They need minimal scaffolding of texts and information to be able to read, write, and discuss texts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use technical language connected to specific content areas.• Use a variety of sentence lengths and of varying complexity.• Extend oral and written discourse in both fiction and nonfiction.• Speak and write comparable to peers who are proficient in English.

Source: WIDA (2019); Krashen (1988); Scarcella (2003); Wright (2019)

Principle 3: See Students Through an Asset Lens



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Understanding students' assets is an inherent responsibility of a teacher (Stembridge, 2020). Teachers know this, of course, but sometimes the error-focused nature of standardized testing causes a deficit lens to prevail. Seeing strengths is of particular importance for educators whose cultural background is different than their students. Reflecting on students and seeing students' strengths and gifts is one way to see and appreciate their assets. Then we can leverage students' assets and fold them into the design of the learning experiences throughout the school day (Stembridge, 2020).



Seeing strengths is of particular importance for educators whose cultural background is different than their students.

Equitable learning opportunities are based on students' assets. Writes Stembridge,

“Our goal as educators is to see our students as asset-filled beings and then to apply that awareness in classroom instruction.”

What does it look and sound like when we apply this goal to our instruction in English language development? It's going to look like a lot of peer work, because collaborative practice has been shown to be highly effective in developing multilingual learners' social and emotional and academic strengths. And it's going to sound like a lot of beautiful, young voices as students talk together to deepen ideas, problem solve, and find commonalities (Honigsfeld & Dove, 2013).

For educators, an asset-based approach may involve doing a “flight check” on your current beliefs, possible implicit biases, and practices. There are so many excellent resources on culturally responsive practices. It's beyond the scope of this book to explore all the facets of equity, but the following reflection activity is a simple way of enhancing an asset-based mindset.

Think of a student or a group of students that you work with and reflect on the student's gifts and their cultural capital. What does the student bring to the classroom that can expand their learning and the learning of others?

How might you draw out the student's individual and family strengths? (send-home activities, surveys, cultural events)

How can you express students' assets in the classroom?

Show Students They Are Valued and Belong

When students feel seen, known, and valued, their cognition is actually enhanced (Steele, 1995). We do that by getting to know each student and using affirming language and being curious about their lives. Research shows that teacher language is a crucial aspect of a student's belief in themselves as a learner. So, in a book on English language development, you will find a "shadow" layer in every task of language that emboldens students. A few more research-based ways of playing to students' strengths include the following:

- Having a culturally and racially diverse classroom library *that reflects your current students* and using these texts during instruction as well as independent reading and read-alouds
- Designing conversations about texts that include all voices, from all students
- Scaffolding specifically so that students acquiring language and students of an array of backgrounds have voice in your classroom
- Differentiating with instruction, grouping, and use of tools to ensure students learn at high levels

- Not expecting students to respond in one way, such as when the teacher asks a question and calls on students one by one to answer—instead, students can answer in teams or groups
- Providing intensive academic intervention
- For your students who are of color, discuss excellence in people of color and provide information on achievements made by people of color (Howard, 2020).

(adapted from Busholtz et al., 2017; Hammond, 2015; Howard, 2020)

Develop Students' Familiarity With the Language of School

All students benefit when our lessons are clear, our collaborative practice aligns with what was demonstrated, and we plan a series of learning tasks that scaffold students' skill building—and their knowledge building. With multilingual learners, you want to use extra care to ensure to explain academic language like *compare*, *evaluate*, *responsibility*, and *freedom*. Students acquire language when they are at ease, supported, and are invited to use language for purposeful classroom work. Remember to do the following:

- Contextualize academic language by using pictures, diagrams, drawings, web-based videos, and so forth.
- Discuss academic terms and content before launching into a lesson to frontload information, vocabulary, and ideas.
- Provide students with ample time for reading authentic and engaging materials.

Principle 4: Design Instruction to Reflect How Students Acquire English



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Finally, supporting English learners requires that we remember that language is the currency of human connection. It's social. Thus, children acquire English in two ways. One way is by studying how English works, and another way is by being immersed in understandable English used for authentic purposes of communicating with others. What I mean by *English that is understandable* is that the language being used to teach the lesson is comprehensible to students at their current level of proficiency—the student can comprehend what is being said or read. When language is comprehensible, students can understand and begin to talk; they basically begin to “pick up” how to express themselves (Krashen, 1988). Students then use the momentum of talk to listen, read, and write.

Of course, using accessible English is not enough. Students acquiring English need carefully scaffolded lessons. The scaffolding is what makes this book different from *The Big Book of Literacy Tasks*. Each task has purposeful supports specifically for English learners, so it's important to do them with students. Making charts, pair shares, providing sentence stems, kinesthetic activities—these are not fun extras, but crucial components for multilingual students.

Use Language at the Edge of a Student's Range

Noted expert on language acquisition Krashen (1982) studied language acquisition in multilingual learners and found that students best learn language when the language they are working with is just a little bit harder than what they can do on their own, without support. This idea sounds as though it contradicts what I said above about using understandable English in lessons, but it doesn't! What these ideas have in common is that we need to teach into students' zone of proximal development (ZPD; Vygotsky, 1978). The “zone” is when a learner is close to mastering a skill set required to complete a task but still needs the guidance of an expert to do so. If we give a task that is too easy, the student is bored and isn't learning. If we give a task that is too hard, the learner may give up in frustration. When the task is a “just right” challenge, an expert uses various techniques to help the students perform a task independently.

With the ZPD in mind, the tasks in this book will stretch students by using language with them that is just a little beyond their current level of comprehension. This ensures that we are expanding students' vocabulary and background knowledge. If you believe an English language development (ELD) task is too easy, push for an academic conversation with your students. Make pictures and charts while you talk. Pull out new books or texts on the same topic and take the learning deeper. In short, I encourage you to adjust the difficulty level of the task based on your students. Mostly, I hope that you have fun teaching these tasks to your student acquiring English. Please know that they can do more than you likely think they can when it comes to content learning—don't water things down but rather scaffold up. Believe in the power of multilingualism!

Tips for Teaching Students New to English in Small Groups

The idea that students acquire language when they are comfortable and supported was developed by Krashen (1982). This theory is called the *affective filter*. The theory describes a condition of student comfort for learning. That is when a student is emotionally distraught or socio-emotionally not supported in the classroom and in their learning environments, the student may experience difficulty acquiring English. The fear of making mistakes in

front of peers impedes their ability to learn. Low-anxiety learning settings improve student motivation, esteem, and self-confidence. These factors remain high, making it more likely that students will be able to focus on the lesson and the language being used in the lesson (Peregoy & Boyle, 2016).

You may wonder if you need to exclusively form groups for students based on English language acquisition level. The short answer is “no.” However, you want to ensure you are providing activities in lessons that support all students’ abilities so everyone can participate and learn. While whole group lessons can be intimidating and not be targeted enough to meet the needs of a student new to English, if they don’t have emotionally safe opportunities to work with peers, they will not be exposed to the language proficiency of other students, either in their heritage language or English (Akhavan, 2019).

You may be teaching ELD whole group to a group of students who are all acquiring English, or you might be teaching ELD in small groups. To get started with groups, create a dedicated space for small group instruction. You may choose the library corner or clean off a rectangle or kidney-shaped table and move it to a convenient location in your classroom (Akhavan, 2019).

Knowing that the four domains of language (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) occur naturally together in the classroom when we focus ELD instruction on topics of interest to students, we can work on building background knowledge about interesting topics, facilitate listening and speaking opportunities about these topics, and also include reading and writing activities.

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