



Effective Instruction for ELLs: What the Research Says

Of the five major, meta-analyses conducted on the education of ELLs, ALL five came to the very same conclusion:

"Teaching students to read in their first language promotes higher levels of reading achievement in English" (p. 14, 2008).

"Bilingual education produced superior reading outcomes in English compared with English immersion" (p. 9, 2013).

Sources: Goldenberg (2013). *Unlocking the Research on English Learners: What we know—and don't know—about effective instruction*. *American Educator*, 37 (2), pp. 4-11, 38-39. and Goldenberg, C. (2008). *Teaching English language learners: What the research does—and does not—say*. *American Educator*, 32 (2) pp. 8-23, 42-44.

Effective Instruction for ELLs: What the Research Says

Typical English Learners who begin school 30 NCE's behind their native English speaking peers in achievement, are expected to learn at:

"...an average of about one-and-a-half years' progress in the next six consecutive years (for a total of nine years' progress in six years—a 30-NCE gain, from the 20th to the 50th NCE) to reach the same long-term performance level that a typical native-English speaker...staying at the 50th NCE) (p. 46).

In other words, they must make 15 months of academic progress in each 10 month school year for six straight years—they must learn 1½ times faster than normal.

Source: Thomas, W. & Collier, V. (1997). Language Minority Student Achievement and Program Effectiveness. Washington DC: NCBE.

The Neuropsychology of Bilingualism and Reading Development

Subtypes of Dyslexia	Implications for Normal Bilinguals
Dysphonetic Dyslexia - difficulty in using phonological route in reading, so visual route to lexicon is used. Little reliance on letter-to-letter sound conversion. Over-reliance on visual cues to determine meaning from print.	Similar problems may be evident in cases where the individual is past the critical period (10-12 y/o) when first hearing sounds of new language. Neuronal pruning creates "wall" that limits processing of new sounds.
Surface Dyslexia - over-reliance on sound/symbol relationships as process of reading never becomes automatic. Words broken down to individual phonemes and read slowly and laboriously, especially where phonemes and graphemes are not in 1-to-1 correspondence.	Similar problems that are the most common and typical manifestations of bilingualism due to the lack of sufficient time and opportunity to develop automaticity and reading fluency. Insufficient orthographic development means reading remains an auditory process that never becomes automatic and transparent.
Mixed Dyslexia - Severely impaired readers with characteristics of both phonological deficits as well as visual/spatial deficits. Have no usable key to reading or spelling code. Bizarre error patterns observed.	Although, over-reliance on visual processing as main or only access to meaning may limit all areas of reading development, bilinguals generally display intact visual processing skills that somewhat mitigate phonological delays. Problems in both areas would be unusual for bilinguals and monolinguals.
Reading Comprehension Difficulties - inability to apply strategies to derive meaning from print. Deficiencies in working memory common and vocabulary development may lag behind peers.	Similar problems may result from delays in acquisition of CALP and verbal abilities relative to grade. Limited exposure relative to English-speaking peers is not easily, and often never, overcome for the average child.

Ortiz, S. O., Douglas, S. & Fajfar, S. G. (2011). Bilingualism and Written Expression: A neuropsychological perspective. In S. G. Fajfar (Ed.) *The Neuropsychology of Written Language Disorders: A framework for effective interventions* (pp. 111-130). Middleton, MD: School Neuropsych Press

The Neuropsychology of Bilingualism and Reading Development

Characteristics of Impaired Readers	Characteristics of Normal Bilinguals
Poor decoding skills – <i>Suggests intrinsic difficulty in phonological processing</i>	Poor decoding skills – <i>Circumstantial issue due to not hearing sounds in early childhood</i>
Weak vocabulary development – <i>Suggests intrinsic difficulty despite adequate language exposure</i>	Weak vocabulary development – <i>Circumstantial issue due to lack of comparable exposure to English</i>
Inability to read strategically (can't rely on Gf) – <i>Suggests intrinsic problem in fluid reasoning</i>	Inability to read strategically (can't rely on Gf) – <i>Circumstantial issue due to limited educational benefit and CALP</i>
Poor spelling – <i>Suggests intrinsic problem in visual memory</i>	Good spelling – <i>Assumes no intrinsic problems in visual memory</i>
Many reading opportunities outside of school – <i>Available but insufficient to markedly improve reading skills</i>	Few reading opportunities outside of school – <i>Insufficient to markedly improve reading skills even if available</i>
Poor motivation and confidence – <i>Tendency to avoid reading as it becomes effortful and difficult</i>	Poor motivation and confidence – <i>Tendency to avoid reading as it becomes effortful and difficult</i>

Ortiz, S. G., Douglas, S. & Fejfer, S. G. (2013). Bilingualism and Written Expression: A neuropsychological perspective. In S. G. Fejfer (Ed.) *The Neuropsychology of Written Language Disorders: A framework for effective interventions* (pp. 113-130). Middleton, MD: School Neuropsych Press

Popular Misconceptions about Language Acquisition, Learning and Development

- Accent IS NOT an indicator of proficiency—it is a marker regarding when an individual first began to hear/learn the language
- Children DO NOT learn languages faster and better than adults do—they only seem to because they have better pronunciation but CUP aids adult learners considerably
- Language development CAN NOT be accelerated—but having developed one language to a high degree (CALP) does help in learning a second language more easily
- Learning two languages DOES NOT lead to a kind of linguistic confusion—there is no evidence that learning two or more language simultaneously produces any interference
- Learning two languages DOES NOT lead to poor academic performance—on the contrary, students who learn two languages very well (CALP in both) tend to outperform their monolingual peers in school
- Code-switching IS NOT an example of a language disorder and poor grammatical ability—it is only an example of how bilinguals use whatever words may be necessary to communicate their thoughts as precisely as possible, irrespective of the language

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Reading 101 for English Learners “Colorin” Colorado

<http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/reading-101-english-language-learners>



Phonemic Awareness and English Learners

Phonemic Awareness: Challenges and Strategies

What: The ability to hear and manipulate the different sounds in our language.

Why it matters: Phonemic awareness is the foundation for spelling and word recognition skills.

Challenges for ELLs

Sound recognition and production

Students may not be able to "hear" or produce a new sound in a second language.

Students who cannot hear and work with the phonemes of spoken words will have a difficult time learning how to relate these phonemes to letters when they see them in written words.

Phonemic Awareness and English Learners

Strategies for ELLs

Model production of the sound

Spend a few minutes at the beginning of class or in small groups demonstrating and reinforcing the correct production of the sound.

Help beginning readers learn to identify sounds in short words

Have students practice identifying the sounds in the beginning, middle, and end of these words. You may wish to use words that begin with a consonant, have a short vowel, and end in a consonant (CVC words) such as *mat*, *top*, and *bus*.

One very effective method is having students match pictures of words that have the same beginning, middle, or ending sound.

Be careful to use only words that students know in English!

Phonics and English Learners

Phonics: Challenges and Strategies

What: The relationship between a sound and its corresponding written letter.

Why it matters: Reading development is dependent on the understanding that letters and letter patterns represent the sounds of spoken language.

Challenges for ELLs

Limited literacy skills in native language

Many educators believe that students only need to learn to read once. Once the concept of matching a symbol with a sound has been learned, it can be applied to new languages.

Students who have learned to read in their native language have a distinct advantage because they were able to learn this concept with familiar sounds and words.

Students who have not learned to read in their native language, however, may struggle to put together the sound/symbol correspondence concept, new words, and new sounds all at once.

It is difficult for students to distinguish phonetic components in new vocabulary words.

Unfamiliar vocabulary words

Preteaching vocabulary is an important part of good phonics instruction with ELLs so that students aren't trying to figure out new vocabulary items out of context.

Phonics and English Learners

Strategies for ELLs

Using literature and content material, you can introduce and reinforce:

- letter recognition
- beginning and ending sounds
 - blends
 - rhyming words
 - silent letters
 - homonyms

Teach phonics in context

Use hands-on activities to help teach letter-sound relationships

This can include using manipulatives such as counters, sound boxes, and magnetic letters.

Have students write for sound

Say a short sentence that includes one or more words that include the target phonics feature(s). Ask students to listen carefully and then write what they heard.

This activity trains students to listen for the individual sounds in words and represent them phonetically in their writing.

Help students make connections

For students with strong native language literacy skills, help them understand that the process of sounding out words is the same across languages.

Vocabulary and English Learners

Vocabulary: Challenges and Strategies

What: Recognizing and understanding words in relation to the context of the reading passage.

Why: Understanding vocabulary words is a key step in reading comprehension. The more words a child knows, the better he or she will understand the text.

Challenges for ELLs

Limited comprehension

Beginning readers must use the words they hear orally to make sense of the words they sound out. If those words aren't a part of a student's vocabulary, however, it will make it much harder to understand the text.

Consider, for example, what happens when a beginning reader comes to the word *dig* in a book. As she begins to figure out the sounds represented by the letters *d-i-g*, the reader recognizes that the sounds make up a very familiar word that she has heard and said many times.

As a result, it is harder for ELLs figure out words that are not already part of their speaking (oral) vocabulary.

Vocabulary and English Learners

Focus on cognates

Cognates are words in different languages that are derived from the same original word or root. Cognates are related words like *family* and *familia*, and *conversation* and *conversación*. False cognates do exist (*embarazada* in Spanish means pregnant, not embarrassed), but they are the exception to the rule.

About 40% of all English words have cognates in Spanish! This is an obvious bridge to the English language for Spanish speakers if the student is made aware of how to use this resource. Encourage Spanish speakers to connect words in the two languages and try to decipher text based on this existing knowledge.

As the teacher, you can explicitly teach word meanings to improve comprehension. However, to know a word means knowing it in all of the following dimensions:

- The ability to define a word
- The ability to recognize when to use that word
 - Knowledge of its multiple meanings
- The ability to decode and spell that word

Fluency and English Learners

Fluency: Challenges and Strategies

What: The ability to read a text accurately and quickly.

Why it matters: Fluency is important because it provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension.

Challenges for ELLs

Inaccurate indicator of ELLs' comprehension

It is not unusual for an ELL student to read a passage beautifully and then not be able answer more than a couple of comprehension questions correctly. Decoding skills (sounding out words) and comprehending the text are two different skills.

Limited benefit from hearing texts read aloud

Native speakers who are not strong decoders can often comprehend text that is read to them better than text that they read themselves. That's because when someone else is doing the reading, they can focus on meaning without having to struggle to get the words off the page.

With ELLs, however, comprehension problems tend to be associated with limited vocabulary and limited background knowledge. Thus, listening to text read by someone else won't enhance comprehension.

Fluency and English Learners

Strategies for ELLs

Balance fluency and comprehension

For ELLs, try not to provide instruction in fluency that focuses primarily on developing students' reading rates at the expense of reading with expression, meaning, and comprehension.

Students may read fast, but with insufficient comprehension. Fluency without comprehension will require instructional intervention in vocabulary and comprehension skills.

Give students a chance to practice reading out loud

In order to improve fluency in English, provide independent level texts that students can practice again and again, or read a short passage and then have the student immediately read it back to you.

Have the student practice reading a passage with a certain emotion or to emphasize expression, intonation, and inflection based on punctuation.

Allow students to practice reading along with taped text

This is an excellent way for them to learn appropriate pronunciation and phrasing.

Comprehension

Comprehension is the understanding and interpretation of what is read. To be able to accurately understand written material, children need to be able to 1) decode what they read; 2) make connections between what they read and what they already know; and 3) think deeply about what they have read.

Comprehension can be the most difficult skill to master, however. ELLs at all levels of English proficiency, and literacy development, will benefit from explicit instruction in comprehension skills along with other skills because improved comprehension will not only help them in language arts and ESL classes — it will help them in content-area classes and in daily activities. It will also improve the chances of their interest in reading for pleasure.

Learn more from the following articles:

- [Comprehension Skills for Content Learning](#)
- [Finding the Main Idea](#)
- [Reading Comprehension Strategies for English Language Learners](#)

Comprehension

Strategies for ELLs

Build background knowledge	<p>One way to build background knowledge is through a book, unit or chapter "walk-through." ELLs can preview the information in the text and begin to <u>make connections with the knowledge they have</u>.</p> <p>If the text is about a fair, the student may note that the pictures are similar to fairs they have attended in the past and they can think of the kinds of experiences a person has in that environment.</p> <p>If it is a science textbook the student may see visuals of animals or processes that remind them of concepts they may have learned or are somewhat familiar with.</p>
Check comprehension frequently	<p>As students read, ask them open-ended questions about what they are reading, and informally test students' ability to sequence material from sentences or a story by printing sentences from a section of the story on paper strips, mixing the strips or word order, and having students put them in order.</p>
Use questions after reading	<p>After the ELLs and/or whole class have completed the reading, you can test their comprehension with carefully crafted questions, taking care to use simple sentences and key vocabulary from the text they just read.</p> <p>These questions can be at the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Literal level (Why do the leaves turn red and yellow in the fall?) • Interpretive level (Why do you think it needs water?) • Anndled level (How much water are you going to give it? Why?)

ELL Overlays-SAS

The English Language Learner (ELL) Overlays for English Language Arts and Mathematics are designed to assist educators in developing instructional units, lessons, or activities that are meaningful and comprehensible for English language learners. They illustrate the dynamic process of adapting instruction and assessments based on the English language proficiency of students.

ELL Overlays-SAS

Reading Model Performance Indicator (MPI)							
Classroom Context: Identify story events and details.							
Cognitive Function: Students at all levels of English proficiency will IDENTIFY story events and details.							
Concepts	Competencies	Vocabulary and Topic Related Language	Proficiency Level 1 Entering	Proficiency Level 2 Emerging	Proficiency Level 3 Developing	Proficiency Level 4 Expanding	Proficiency Level 5 Bridging

ELL Overlays-SAS

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Text analysis	Use specific details from the story to answer questions. Answer questions about key details in a text.	Character Setting First Next Last In the beginning . . . (story) In the middle . . . (story) At the end . . . (story) Who What Where When How	Associate pictures with language about story events and characters, following explicit, repeated examples, as modeled and monitored by the teacher.	Find words or icons related to story events or characters in visually supported books with teacher support.	Match labeled pictures of story events and characters with a partner.	Sort illustrated text about story events and characters using graphic organizers with a partner.	Locate language about story events and characters in illustrated texts.