Supporting Newcomer English Learners in Content Classrooms

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Resources for Today

Please go to https://www.chrisspackman.com/2023-10-04.html for links we will use today.

Or, use this QR code:

About Chris Spackman

- **Email:** chris@chrisspackman.com
- **Social Media:** @chris_spackman@twit.social (Mastodon)
- Taught K-12 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) in Japan 1995–2008
- Earned MA TESOL and Ohio TESOL K-12 teaching license in 2010
- Work in K-12 ESOL for The Graham Family of Schools since 2010
- Teach Adult ESOL for the Basic English program in the Language Institute at Columbus State Community College since 2016
- Know English, Japanese, a little German, and a little Spanish

Today's *Nagare*

"*Nagare*" is a Japanese word meaning "flow".

- Discussion and questions about the reading
- Brief discussion — what are you already doing?
- About newcomers and strategies for working with them
- Legal requirements around English Learners
- Q & A and wrap up
- Resources

Elements of Sheltered Instruction

The reading talked about several important things that content teachers can do to support English Learners. For newcomers, the following are likely most important:

- wait time
- language objectives
- pre-teach vocab
- adapted content

- adapted assignments
- use of L1
- modified teacher speech
- supplementary materials

Yes, that is all of them. I started the list thinking a few might be more important, but no, they are all important for newcomers.

What Are You Already Doing?

What are you doing?

How is it working?

What are your struggles?

Newcomers

Newcomers come from a huge range of situations. Some have had years of quality education and may already know a lot of English. Others may not have had any formal schooling in years.

Things to know:

- cultural background
- prior schooling
- language of schooling
- native language

- other languages
- preferred language(s)
- home / family languages
- family communication preferences

BICS & CALP

BICS: "Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills" — the social language that students need in their daily lives. This usually develops relatively quickly, in around a year or two.

CALP: "Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency" — the academic language that students need to be successful in school. This takes much longer to develop, from around five years to as much as seven years in some cases.

Read more about BICS and CALP at Colorín Colorado.

BICS & CALP is why we should **never** try to identify an English learner's academic skills based soley on how well they can have a conversation.

Overview of Strategies for Working with Newcomers

L1: Students' native or preferred languages are assets. Use them in class.

SI: "Sheltered Instruction" gives us several best practices for working with English Learners, including newcomers

SWIRL: Speaking, Writing, Interaction, Reading, and Listening should be included in every class, as much as possible

Translation: Google Translate is your friend

Vocabulary: this one is key. I like to say "be relentless" with vocabulary instruction.

SWIRL

Speak: Newcomers often have a "quiet period" when the don't talk. This is totally normal. Don't force them. These days, some students may talk earlier than they would have, by using Google Translate to "speak" for them. That's fine.

Write: "Write" can include anything appropriate for the student — from letter practice for non-literate students to essays for more advanced students. For newcomers with less English, this might look like filling in sentence frames (in English) or taking notes in L1.

SWIRL (cont.)

Interact: Working with others — whatever the language — is very important for students to acquire the content. In theory, students should be talking about or working with the content for around 70% of the class.

Read: In theory, simplified readings are discouraged, and it is very easy to make "dumbed down" readings. However, learning from $i+17$ readings is very slow. What is the goal of the reading? Direct close reading practice? More difficult is fine. Building background knowledge? Less difficult is better. LLM ("AI") services can help with differentiation. (BUT, double check.)

SWIRL (cont.)

Listening: Listening can be structured. Guided notes are less great for newcomers than for others. Giving full teacher notes is best because students can follow along without having to try to also write. I've had mixed results with translated slides. Best is maybe L1 slides for reading / review, but English (teacher) slides during lecture.

SWIRL'ing is not always easy, especially at the high school level. Newcomers need more than just reading textbooks and listening to lectures, however. The goal is for them to develop English and content knowledge *as quickly as possible*.

Translating

To save a lot of space and time: please see my web page for PD I did in August. The slides are at "Chris's presentation slides (pdf)" near the top of the page, and contain a lot of information about translating documents. There are lots of other excellent resources linked there.

Direct link to the PDF of the slides: Chris's presentation slides.

Also, I recommend using these slides with built in translation when making new class slides.

Translation (cont.)

Google Translate can translate PDF and PPTX files directly.

- download the PDF or PPTX that you want to translate
- go to Google Translate, click on the "Documents" button.
- click on "upload document" or drag-and-drop the file
- choose the languages to translate from and to
- click the "Translate" button
- wait a few seconds
- click on "Download translation"

Unfortunately, translating PDFs seems to result in very small text. It does get the formatting correct, usually.

Vocabulary

Three vocabulary tiers; they are usually shown as a big triangle.

Tier 1: is the bottom half or so of the triangle. These are the everyday words that newcomers need to learn. Content area teachers usually only teach these as needed.

Tier 2: is the middle part of the triangle. These words appear frequently in academic language, but are not specific to one class or field. These are often the verbs teachers use for content objectives.

Tier 3: is the top, smallest part of the triangle. These are content-area-specific words. Usually the content area teacher is responsible for teaching these words to students.

Vocab (cont.)

Vocabulary: pre-teach it

Definitions: don't have students look them up or copy them

Frayer Model (-type worksheets): use them

ChatGPT (or similar): use it to create readings with the vocabulary at an easy to read grade level. Seeing the words in context helps English Learners a lot.

Word Walls: use them. Have students create them. Be sure they are big enough to see, if that is how you will use them.

Vocab (cont.)

Here are two cool Google Sheets you can use to work on vocabulary with students.

- personal vocabulary by class period / subject — good for individual students and their teachers
- class-wide vocabulary sheet — good for projecting

These spreadsheets use the `GOOGLETRANSLATE` function to do the automagic translation. Wikipedia has a list of two letter ISO country codes.

Legal Requirements

The DOJ and DOE are pretty specific about language access requirements:

*"Schools must communicate information to limited English proficient parents in a language they can understand about **any program, service, or activity that is called to the attention of parents who are proficient in English**" (emphasis added)*

Legal Requirements (cont.)

"This includes, but is not limited to, information related to:"

- registration and enrollment
- requests for parent permission
- parent handbooks

- report cards
- parent-teacher conferences
- special education

from: https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html

Basically, ANYTHING that goes home for family needs to be in a language the family prefers. Also send home the original English — especially if using Google Translate.

Resources

Colorín Colorado is a great site with lots of helpful information. For example:

⇒ Developing lesson plans to include English Learners

⇒ 12 Ways Classroom Teachers Can Support ELLs

⇒ Links to Info on Serving Special Populations

⇒ Things Newcomers Need to Know

Resources (cont.)

The TESOL.org blog has many very helpful articles. Examples include:

⇒ Vocabulary supports for English Learners

⇒ Strategies to optimize reading comprehension

⇒ Scaffolding Writing for MLLs (Multi-Lingual Learners)

⇒ Strategies for L1 supports

⇒ Balancing L1 and English in classes — perhaps more about L1 during ESL class, but elements are appropriate to content classes. (I dislike the use of "allow" in the article, but understand where the author is coming from.)

Resources (cont.)

- 7 Steps to a Language-Rich, Interactive Classroom, an excellent book by John Seidlitz and Bill Perryman.

- Interesting article on Scaffolding Success

- Very informative overview of the research on what works (and doesn't work) for English Learners.

- Slides with lots of great info from a session at the G-Tech Summit, August of 2023. See especially the slides on teaching vocabulary.

- (AI) Advice on prompts to use with ChatGPT. Short advice: be specific, give lots of details, ask it to pretend (to be a teacher, etc.)

Resources (cont.)

- Simple Wikipedia is great for finding short readings to build background knowledge. I often start with one of their articles and modify it for my (students') needs.

- Simple Wiktionary is a good resource for finding simple definitions to help get started building vocabulary.

- Check the readability / grade level of text. This site uses several well-known formulas and gives a consensus score or grade level for the text.

- Vocabulary Profilers can help you decide which words might be more difficult for students. I usually use the Classic VocabProfiler.

Links

- https://blog.tcea.org/chatgpt-prompts-for-busy-educators/
- https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1KAzCf6HSylvn3tsyi1SXHG-VBQHRYXgEIAy2eePFT2w/edit#slide=id.g23b82dfda0d_0_5
- https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1nEXUVQaheyQc133we28SJNg_XN4BYQhd3mxS7nVPrXM/edit?usp=sharing
- https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BQMru7aIOp4Dqa4bA7Q_R3dWK7R-uke3gLILhze_ADM/edit?usp=sharing

Links (cont.)

- https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1su_jQ1VTO_vgN6zAYFOfOCU1bAc418v_YMqisVUbTh8/edit?usp=sharing
- https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ISO_639-1_codes
- https://readabilityformulas.com/readability-scoring-system.php
- https://simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
- https://simple.wiktionary.org/wiki/Main_Page
- https://translate.google.com
- https://twit.social/@chris_spackman

Links (cont.)

- https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2018/august
- https://www.amazon.com/Steps-Language-Rich-Interactive-Classroom-2nd/dp/1732194882/
- https://www.chrisspackman.com/2023-10-04.html
- https://www.chrisspackman.com/educator-resources/pd/2023-08-g-tech-summit/2023-08-spackman-slides.pdf
- https://www.chrisspackman.com/educator-resources/pd/2023-08-g-tech-summit/index.html
- https://www.colorincolorado.org/

Links (cont.)

- https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/12-ways-classroom-teachers-can-support-ells
- https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/helping-ell-newcomers-things-your-students-need-know
- https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/how-develop-lesson-plan-includes-ells
- https://www.colorincolorado.org/ell-basics/special-populations
- https://www.colorincolorado.org/faq/what-are-bics-and-calp

Links (cont.)

- https://www.languagemagazine.com/2023/05/05/scaffolding-success/
- https://www.lextutor.ca/vp/eng/
- https://www.lextutor.ca/vp/
- https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/6-questions-to-support-multilingual-learners-in-learning-content-area-vocabu
- https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/6-strategies-to-balance-the-use-of-l1-and-english-in-the-esl-classroom/

Links (cont.)

- https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/optimizing-reading-comprehension-for-mlls-6-strategies/
- https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/scaffolding-learning-through-primary-language-support-6-effective-strategies
- https://www.tesol.org/blog/posts/scaffolding-writing-for-multilingual-learners/
- https://www.tesol.org/blog/
- mailto:chris@chrisspackman.com
- https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/ellresources.html