

Intervention: Bilingual/ESL Instructional Strategies for ELL Students

More Recommended Instructional Strategies for ELLs

Excerpted from: **Language Acquisition: An Overview** by *Colorin Colorado* (2008)
(All Grades)

Scaffold instruction so students receive comprehensible input and are able to successfully complete tasks at their level. Instructional scaffolding works just like the scaffolding used in building. It holds you at the level needed until you are ready to take it down. Scaffolding includes asking students questions in formats that give them support in answering, such as yes/no questions, one-word identifications, or short answers. It also means providing the context for learning by having visuals or other hands-on items available to support content learning. Also, when practicing a new academic skill such as skimming, scaffolding involves using well-known material so the students aren't struggling with the information while they are trying to learn a new skill. Scaffolding includes whatever it takes to make the instruction meaningful for the student in order to provide a successful learning experience.

Use cognates to help Spanish speakers learn English and derive meaning from content. The Colorín Colorado website has a helpful [list of common cognates](#) in Spanish for teachers to reference. Teachers can explicitly point out cognates for Spanish speaking students so they begin to realize that this is a useful way for them to increase their English vocabulary.

Explicit vocabulary instruction is very important in accelerating ELL students' English language development. Textbooks include [lists of new vocabulary words](#) based on grade-level content, but ELL students need further vocabulary instruction. There are many words in a text that may affect the ELL student's comprehension of the text that a teacher may assume he or she knows. It is important for teachers to develop ways to help students identify the words they don't know, as well as strategies for getting their meaning. Of course it is also beneficial if teachers reinforce the language structures or common associations of vocabulary. For example, "squeak" is a sound that often goes with "mouse" or "door" and it may be stated as, "squeak, squeaky, squeaks, or squeaked."

Error correction should be done very intentionally and appropriately according to student language ability, as noted earlier in the article. Students who are just beginning to speak English are already nervous about using their new language skills and constant correction will not improve their ability; it will just make them want to withdraw. I inform students in advance of the type of errors I will correct, such as "missing articles" and "third person agreement," and then those are the only errors I check. In my class, I do not correct the errors; I circle the mistakes and return the paper to the student. They are responsible for correcting the errors and returning the paper to receive more points. Most of the time the students can make the corrections themselves when they see the area I've circled, but if they have difficulty, I guide them as they make the correction. In this way, I feel there is a manageable amount of correction information to work with and the student will actually learn from doing the correction.

Learning another language. If you learn the language(s) your students speak, they will be thrilled to hear you try it with them. I learned how to say "good morning" in Somali and had to practice for an hour before I felt comfortable saying it. When I did I was rewarded

with the big grins of students as they entered the room. They were excited to teach me other phrases as well, and we discussed how much English they had learned since they arrived in the country. They were very proud to think of how much progress they'd made.

Seek the experts in your building or district who can offer you guidance on effective instructional strategies for your ELL students. There are many teachers who have taught ELL students in your content area, have taught a certain population of students, or are trained ESL or bilingual teachers who have a lot of advice and support to offer. Don't hesitate to look for support when you are challenged to reach students who are learning English. This can be especially true when you have a "pre-production" or "beginning level" student and you are responsible for grade level content instruction.

From: <http://www.colorincolorado.org/article/26751>