

Classroom Instruction
that **Works**
with English Language Learners

2nd Edition

Jane D. Hill • Kirsten B. Miller



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Acknowledgments	v
Introduction	vii
1 Academic Language	1
2 Stages of Second-Language Acquisition.	11
Part I Creating the Environment for Learning	
3 Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback.	25
4 Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition	38
5 Cooperative Learning	52
Part II Helping Students Develop Understanding	
6 Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers	67
7 Nonlinguistic Representations	86
8 Summarizing and Note Taking	99
9 Assigning Homework and Providing Practice.	118
Part III Helping Students Extend and Apply Knowledge	
10 Identifying Similarities and Differences	135
11 Generating and Testing Hypotheses	150
Conclusion	159
Appendix A: The Academic Language Framework.	161
Appendix B: Thinking Language Matrix	162
Appendix C: Template for Planning Language Objectives.	164
Appendix D: Sample Graphic Organizers.	165
References	171
Index	175
About the Authors	181

Introduction

Language has always been the medium of instruction. As teachers, our automatic use of English helps us to create or produce something new for students. We can create stories, produce explanations, construct meaning when we read, and help students make meaningful connections—all just by opening our mouths.

However, the demographics in our classrooms have changed, and students' language learning is no longer the sole responsibility of the English as a Second Language teacher. As of the 2010–2011 school year, English language learners made up 13 percent of the student population nationwide (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). It's not only students learning English who may need language development; it's also native-born students who enter school without a firm foundation in English language development at a level necessary to access curriculum content. These students may come from lower socioeconomic or other high-risk environments, where they have fewer verbal interactions with peers or parents and other caregivers, which can result in substandard academic language development. These students are similar to some English language learners because, although they are conversationally proficient, such proficiency is not the only language competency needed for academic success.

What do regular classroom teachers need to know to become better supporters of language development? This second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* combines the language development tools used in McREL's training programs with the newly energized strategies from the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Dean, Hubbell,

Pitler, & Stone, 2012) to provide a comprehensive instructional guide for mainstream teachers of students acquiring English and other students in need of language development.

What Is Classroom Instruction That Works?

Classroom Instruction That Works describes nine categories of instructional strategies that have a high likelihood of improving student achievement. In 2001, McREL presented the research supporting these categories in the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In 2012, based on updated research and more than a decade of intervening field experience, our colleagues at McREL wrote the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Dean et al., 2012).

Since the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* was published in 2006 (Hill & Flynn), we've learned a lot about how to foster higher-order thinking and learning for students with limited English proficiency. With this second edition, we're applying that deeper understanding to each of the nine categories of strategies.

Organization of the Book

In the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works*, the strategies were organized by the magnitude of their effect size. Many readers took this presentation as a de facto rank ordering, encouraging them to focus on the first several strategies while more or less neglecting the others. As a result, the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* reorganized the nine instructional categories into an instructional planning framework that focuses on key aspects of teaching and learning. We use that same framework in this second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners*:

- I. Creating the Environment for Learning
 - Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
 - Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
 - Cooperative Learning

- II. Helping Students Develop Understanding
 - Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers
 - Nonlinguistic Representations
 - Summarizing and Note Taking
 - Assigning Homework and Providing Practice
- III. Helping Students Extend and Apply Knowledge
 - Identifying Similarities and Differences
 - Generating and Testing Hypotheses

Students learning English as another language need explicit instruction in acquiring academic English. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background information on academic language and the stages of language acquisition. What should we do differently when emerging second-language learners and others who need language development are part of the regular education classroom? In this book, we provide you with tools to apply the *Classroom Instruction That Works* strategies with your students learning English, including prompts, activities, and updated classroom examples.

Each chapter from 3 through 11 addresses one of the nine categories of research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. These chapters include action-oriented content that more deeply reflects practical ways to apply the strategies to instructing English language learners and others in need of language development, and they offer tips on how teachers can foster English language proficiency as part of subject-matter instruction. Because many second-language learners are in mainstream classrooms for the entire school day, teachers should support language development and content by applying the recommendations offered in this book.

New in This Edition

New to this second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* are the Thinking Language Matrix and sections that offer opportunities to develop oral academic language (using our Academic Language

Framework). In addition, there are tips for teaching and examples aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

The Thinking Language Matrix

The Thinking Language Matrix aligns the higher-order thinking skills of Bloom's taxonomy to the stages of second-language acquisition for each specific strategy. The matrix provides a tool for challenging English language learners at all levels of thinking and across all stages of second-language acquisition. It illustrates that a lack of English language proficiency does not necessarily indicate a corresponding lack of higher-order thinking skills. The alignment of stages of second-language acquisition with higher-order thinking effectively encourages new, and more rigorous, approaches to instruction. This approach provides opportunities for second-language learners to think and interact with knowledge at more sophisticated levels.

Educators using the Thinking Language Matrix have experienced epiphanies when they realize that even beginning-level English language learners can work at all levels of higher-order thinking. When students are acquiring English as a new language together with new content, the Thinking Language Matrix provides educators with a framework for thinking about students' stages of English proficiency in conjunction with what students are expected to accomplish in tasks based on Bloom's taxonomy. Some educators have suggested using the Thinking Language Matrix as a guideline for addressing rigor with students acquiring English as another language.

Opportunities to develop oral academic language

Research strongly supports the need for English language learners to develop rich oral academic language as a precursor for reading and writing proficiently in English (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Saunders & O'Brien, 2006; Walqui, 2010; Williams & Roberts, 2011). For each strategy, we describe how to incorporate opportunities to develop oral academic language into subject-area content. Teachers of English language learners and others in need of language development recognize the need to support the rich oral academic language of

instructional content but might not be sure about how to make it happen. We offer concrete ways to set the stage for productive academic talk that are aligned to each of the categories of McREL's research-based instructional strategies.

Examples aligned to standards

As noted in our description of the Thinking Language Matrix, lower-level language skills are not equivalent to lower-level thinking skills. Similarly, the increased rigor demanded by the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards does not mean that linguistically diverse students can't meet these standards. Throughout this book, we provide the tools needed to incorporate academic language into content and to address the higher-order thinking skills called for in the current generation of standards. As an additional support, we provide specific examples aligned to the standards using the Academic Language Framework, a tool for infusing language-development standards into content. The framework provides a template for thinking about the language of content and a sequence of steps that will help you select key vocabulary words and grammar concepts and design content-based sentence starters that help students engage in productive academic talk.

Tips for teaching

At the end of Chapters 3 through 11, we pull everything together with a list of tips for teaching students in need of language development. The goal is to make each strategy work for *all* students, no matter what their stage of language proficiency.

A Note on Acronyms

In this book, we show you how to involve culturally and linguistically diverse students, at all stages of second-language acquisition, in higher-order thinking. These students are in our charge, and it's our responsibility to help them reach the highest levels of learning possible. We sincerely believe that these students are children first and English language learners second.

To avoid reducing students in need of language development to a label, we have chosen not to refer to them in the acronym-rich language of the field:

ELL, LEP, CLD, or ESL. Rather, we use a number of other descriptors, such as “students acquiring English” and “second-language learners.”

As we run through all of the acronyms used to refer to children (and adults) in the fields of education, psychology, mental health, and social services, we know that we wouldn’t want to be known simply as a series of capital letters. It is our hope that avoiding the use of acronyms in this book will help us keep our collective focus on our students as individuals.

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