

Research-Based Strategies for English Language Learners

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How to Reach Goals and Meet Standards, K-8

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Contents

FOREWORD • ix

INTRODUCTION • xi

What Are Instructional Scaffolds? xiii

How Is This Book Organized? xiv

CHAPTER ONE • 1

Theoretical Bases: *Constructivist Learning and Second Language Acquisition*

Constructivist Learning 1

Embedded Learning 2

Manipulatives: Objects to See, Touch, and Move 2

Collaboration: Cooperative Learning 2

Multidimensional Learning: Drawing on Students' Strengths 4

Physical Action: Moving to Learn 5

Mediated Learning and Metacognition: The Teacher as Guide 6

Second Language Acquisition 7

Background Knowledge 7

Conversational Versus Academic Language Proficiency 8

The Acquisition-Versus-Learning Hypothesis 9

The Input Hypothesis and Cognitive Development 9

The Importance of Output 10

Contextualized and Decontextualized Learning 11

Teaching Language Through Content and Developing All Modes
of Language 12

CHAPTER TWO • 14

Modeling: *Show Them, Help Them, Let Them Do It*

Thinking Aloud 15

Lesson Plan: Story Elements 16

Reading Informational Text (Nonfiction)	20
A Think-Aloud About Text Structure	22
Lesson Plan: Cause-and-Effect Text Structure	23
Final Thoughts on Teaching Nonfiction Text	25
The Chapter in a Nutshell	26

CHAPTER THREE • 28

Contextualizing: *Provide Clues to Meaning*

Visuals	29
Movies and Videos	30
Lesson Plan: Breathing Life into Teaching	30
Reading Boxes	32
Lesson Plan: Reading <i>Sadako</i> (Coerr 1993)	33
Lesson Plan: Experiencing the Civil War	34
Manipulatives	37
Lesson Plan: Creating a Remembrance Quilt	38
Collaborative Grouping	40
Lesson Plan: Community Games	41
Moving to Learn	42
Lesson Plan: Classification	43
Final Thoughts	44
The Chapter in a Nutshell	44

CHAPTER FOUR • 46

Thinking About Thinking: *Develop a Mental Framework*

Building Background Knowledge	48
Lesson Plan: Black Culture Tea Party	48
Bridging Past Learning and New Learning	50
Lesson Plan: Using Metaphor	52
Metacognition	53
Graphic Organizers	55
The Chapter in a Nutshell	58

CHAPTER FIVE • 59

Reframing Information

Readers Theatre	60
Miniperformances	61
Lesson Plan: The First Farmer	61

Poetry 63
Lesson Plan: Breathe In, Breathe Out 64
Murals 67
Lesson Plan: Explorers/Native American Mural 67
Tableaus 69
Lesson Plan: Civil War Tableau 70
The Chapter in a Nutshell 71

CHAPTER SIX • 73

Developing Conversational and Academic Language

Knowing About Linguistics 75
Giving Both Conversational and Academic Language Their Due 77
Lesson Plan: Weather 82
Lesson Plan: All About Me 84
Lesson Plan: *Romeo and Juliet* 86
Final Thoughts 88

APPENDIX A • 91

Self-Assessment—Lesson Plan Chart

APPENDIX B • 94

The Teachers and Classrooms Behind the Lesson Plans

APPENDIX C • 97

How the Lesson Plans Are Structured

CHILDREN’S LITERATURE • 98

BIBLIOGRAPHY • 99

INDEX • 107

Foreword

During the sixteen years we taught and wrote in Fresno, California, we had the opportunity to meet and work with many talented teachers. Two of the most talented were Denise Rea and Sandra Mercuri. Both were students in our master's degree program, which prepared teachers to work with bilingual students. Denise and Sandra both had the special gift of taking theory and research and putting it into practice, the topic of this book.

Since completing their master's degrees, Denise and Sandra have had many additional important experiences that have added to the richness of this book. Denise has served as a specialist for working effectively with second language students in her large and diverse school district and, because of her own research and writing, she was designated the Hmong language and culture specialist. This designation proved her dedication to the large numbers of Hmong students who were not being well served in her area. Because of her expertise and the large numbers of ELL students in area classrooms, Denise was asked by a local university to work part-time as a supervisor of student teachers. This position led to a full-time university position, and she presently serves as the Teacher Education Director, planning curriculum for all future teachers who will need to be prepared for the diverse students who will be in their classrooms.

Sandra is an immigrant. She and her family came to this country ten years ago. Sandra's experiences were not the same as those of many children in our schools because she came to this country well prepared academically and with some English. However, that does not mean that Sandra and her family did not face many challenges. Her experiences adjusting to a new country and new culture have helped Sandra understand the struggles that second language learners face. In order to get a teaching credential, Sandra had to



take coursework and standardized tests in a language and within a cultural context that were new to her. While taking university coursework, Sandra worked as an intern teacher of migrant students. She quickly realized that traditional teaching was not effective with her newcomer students. When she read the research and studied effective practices for bilingual students, she decided to put research and theory into practice. She was so successful with this that she was nominated as an outstanding teacher in her district. Sandra began to share her successes in teaching at conferences and was asked, because of her strong teaching and her bilingualism, to direct a grant for dual language teacher preparation at a local university. Sandra now teaches full-time at the university and counsels teachers working on an M.A. degree in both TESOL and bilingual education. In addition, she is completing a doctoral degree at the University of California at Davis.

It is important for readers to understand the strong academic and experiential backgrounds that these two teachers bring to this book. The ideas that Denise and Sandra share here are tried and true. These two authors wrote this book because they believed there were not enough practical ideas laid out for teachers working with ELL students. It is their hope that this book will fill a gap and help teachers, even those in the present climate of testing and overemphasis on skills instruction, to meet the academic needs of their diverse students.

Research-Based Strategies for English Language Learners blends theory and practice. Each chapter provides the research base for the strategies that are introduced. The strategies are carefully described. Scenarios from a variety of classrooms help bring the strategies to life. One especially helpful feature is a summary section at the end of Chapters 2 through 5 called *The Chapter in a Nutshell*. These pages provide a clear summary of the strategies described in the chapter. The authors have extensive background working in classrooms with English language learners. They also have studied the research that supports effective practice for second language students. In this book they share their experiences by providing many practical, research-based strategies that teachers can immediately put into practice.

—Yvonne S. Freeman and David E. Freeman

Introduction

I have been in classrooms where students don't speak any English. They don't understand what is being said and seem totally lost. There is no special instruction for them. I saw one student just put his head down on the desk and cry. The teacher just ignored him. Is this the right thing to do?

—DEBBIE, PRESERVICE TEACHER

Debbie's question—"Is this the right thing to do?"—is the motivation for this book. How can teachers provide challenging and engaging instruction in academically, linguistically, racially, ethnically, and socially diverse classrooms? How do English language learners learn to speak English well? How can all students succeed in a rigorous curriculum in which no one is left behind?

Every year there are more and more English language learners in our schools. Students with cultural and linguistic differences are now or soon will be the norm rather than the exception in mainstream classrooms. Since 1998, the number of students not fluent in English has almost doubled, while the student population as a whole has remained essentially the same. In California, for example:

- More than 60 percent of students are students of color.
- 80 percent of teachers are Caucasian.
- 40 percent of students are Latino.
- One out of four children is learning English as a second language.
- About one out of three children enters kindergarten speaking a language other than English. (California State Department of Education 1996)

The reality is this: the new mainstream classroom comprises both English language learners and native speakers of English.

Some English language learners arrive with adequate schooling in their primary language. These students usually catch up academically. Others arrive with limited or no schooling in their primary language. These students are below grade level in all areas and generally struggle throughout their schooling. The most forgotten subgroup of English language learners are the long-term English language learners. These students have been in the U.S. school system for at least seven years. They have been able to develop only conversational English language skills and are struggling in all areas of literacy. Many times their teachers assume they have not only conversational speaking skills but academic English skills as well. Generally they do not. They often come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and homes in which literacy is minimal. The interventions and instruction they have received have been inadequate, and they are highly likely to drop out before they graduate from high school (Freeman, Freeman, and Mercuri 2002).

While the native speakers of English are fluent conversationalists, they may still need to develop language skills in English. They come with diverse needs, abilities, strengths, experiences, and interests. They may come from low socioeconomic backgrounds and homes in which literacy is little valued. (There is a growing trend to include students with learning disabilities in the mainstream classroom as well.)

Teachers know they are not reaching some of these students. Traditional teaching, with rows of desks occupied by isolated students completing worksheets and answering textbook questions, is no longer adequate. Attendance is too irregular, there are too many disruptions, and there is a huge span of reading abilities. Students come with background experiences, values, and knowledge unique to their cultural ethnicities, and classes include learners with many different first languages at various stages of English language acquisition.

In his research on effective teachers, William Sanders says that the single greatest effect on student performance is the teacher. It's not race or poverty as many people believe. (Sanders 1996). What teachers do matters. This book asks teachers to use all the tools in their toolbox, to take their best practices

and synthesize them with valuable new scaffolds so that all students' instructional needs and learning styles are addressed and all students have the opportunity to perform to their potential.

What Are Instructional Scaffolds?

Scaffolds are common in the construction industry, but the term is also a useful metaphor when applied to teaching. In the classroom, a teacher uses a scaffold to support a student's understanding of a concept or skill. A scaffold has been described as a deliberate course of action that teachers create to help students focus on ideas and processes (McKenzie 2000). While essential, a scaffold is temporary and is withdrawn when students no longer need the support. The scaffolds presented in this book are based on practices that have been identified in the literature as essential for supporting the academic progress of English language learners. These strategies can be used in any curricular area (this book includes examples drawn from social studies and science) and almost any grade level, K–8. Remember too that a scaffold is not used in isolation and that two or more can be used in a given lesson. The teacher uses experience and expertise to blend scaffolds to suit the interests and abilities of the students.

Teachers may already use scaffolds and not know it. A scaffold can be as simple as asking students to draw pictures of the beginning, middle, and end of a story before writing or arranging students into heterogeneous ability groups to work on a project. Scaffolds offer many benefits.

- They clarify the purpose of a lesson for English language learners.
- Scaffolds keep English language learners on task, helping them understand what to do.
- Scaffolds allow for a more efficient use of time. English language learners can immediately begin to work without asking for additional clarification or assistance.
- They create momentum or increase the flow of a lesson because there are fewer interruptions for clarifications and directions. (Adapted from McKenzie 2000)

In other words, scaffolds help English language learners learn new vocabulary, understand new concepts, and use new skills as they progress through the curriculum with full participation. With the help of scaffolds, students can rise to the highest levels of their capabilities.

“How do caterpillars turn into butterflies?” is the question driving a unit of study in a class full of second-grade English language learners. These students cannot wait until they have fully mastered English before they explore and receive instruction in this rigorous, high-quality unit. But since they are not proficient in English, how will they learn and then show what they know?

Their teacher, Denise, brings a live butterfly to class to spark interest and help generate research: What do they already know about butterflies? What would they like to know? After their discussion, Denise suggests important questions the students may have missed. The students then categorize their questions into those related to habitat, physical characteristics, and similar categories. Each day during the unit, these English language learners observe what is happening in the caterpillar/butterfly terrarium, read a variety of related books and articles, and share their findings orally, visually, and in writing.

Denise has structured the learning to meet the needs of all her students. First, her instruction begins where the students are cognitively and linguistically. The tasks and opportunities focus on what the students need to know and appropriate ways in which they can explain their understanding. Second, Denise uses a number of strategies. She provides a variety of reading materials (fiction and nonfiction) of varying difficulty and shows videos and video clips. Students are paired or grouped for some research activities, share with her one-on-one, and make presentations (sometimes as part of a panel) in front of the class. By scaffolding her instruction, she will give all the students opportunities to understand their learning and show what they know.

How Is This Book Organized?

This book is organized around the scaffolding concepts suggested by Walqui van Lier (2003), with some adaptations. Carol Ann Tomlinson’s writing on differentiated instruction—providing a variety of ways to explore curriculum—

has also influenced our thinking about instruction for English language learners. Our work with English language learners aligns with the research that says adapting instruction according to student need helps provide a different pathway to success for struggling learners (Tomlinson 2003).

Chapter 1 provides a theoretical framework of how students learn, detailing a constructivist view of learning and discussing the theorists who have influenced the scaffolds, strategies, and lessons provided in the rest of the book.

Chapters 2 through 5 discuss specific scaffolds: modeling (Chapter 2), contextualizing (Chapter 3), developing a mental framework (Chapter 4), and reframing information (Chapter 5). We relate each scaffold to the pertinent learning or second language acquisition theories described in Chapter 1. Next, we present specific strategies that highlight the scaffold. Finally, to demonstrate how teachers can blend the strategies into their own lessons, we include complete lesson plans (for various grade levels, K–8) that we or our colleagues have taught in the classroom.

These lesson plans are similar to many used in schools today, with the addition of three important elements.

1. An English language development standard, as determined by Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Literacy and language learning go hand in hand. This addition ensures that every lesson becomes an opportunity for English language learners to acquire more English listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. It also helps teachers focus their instruction on clear and precise language goals to go along with their content goals.
2. An input strategy. Teachers need to consider in advance how the information or content will be presented to students. Lecture should not be the only teaching strategy used. Materials also need to be considered. With English language learners, it is essential to make the input comprehensible through visuals (including videos) and realia (objects or activities used to relate classroom teaching to real life).
3. Active learning. Here teachers consider how they will ask students to interact with the new information—discuss, debate, or question their understanding of what they are learning.

The structure of the lesson plans is summarized in Appendix C.

The final chapter, Chapter 6, discusses the specific linguistic understanding teachers need in order to teach language to English language learners. It presents strategies teachers can use to help their students develop conversational and academic language ability. In it, we:

- examine the recent attention being given to English language learners and their sustained academic success
- discuss the background of English language development and the importance of developing both conversational and academic language
- discuss vocabulary specific to academic language as well as general vocabulary used in relation to all subjects in the curriculum
- suggest literacy and standards-based lessons that include a linguistic component showing teachers how to integrate appropriate language development into their daily lessons

Chapter 6 departs from previous chapters by seeming to advocate the use of direct instruction in teaching language. There is an important reason for this: there is enormous pressure for teachers to prepare students for testing and to address the issue of underperforming English language learners. Administrators in some areas are asking teachers to submit lesson plans that show they are, in fact, teaching language. The information in this chapter will help teachers do just that.

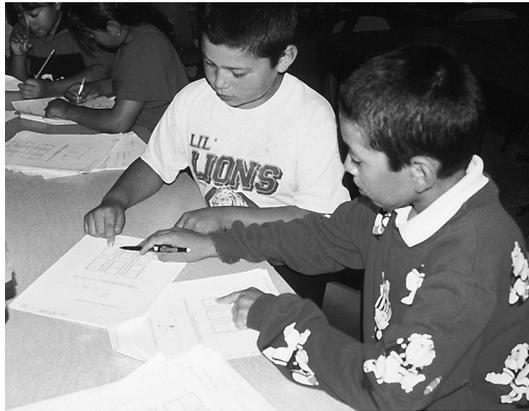
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Thinking About Thinking

Develop a Mental Framework

The most powerful thing we can teach is strategic knowledge—a knowledge of the procedures people use to learn, to think, to read, and to write. The most effective way to introduce students to how to use these tools is to model them in the contexts of meaningful tasks and then to assist students in their own use of these strategies.

—JEFFREY WILHELM



When teachers worry excessively about fitting in all the instruction they are expected to cover, opportunities to work with new ideas do not materialize. Teachers intuitively know students learn more and remember longer when given multiple opportunities to work with new ideas. In many school districts, the number of standards teachers are

expected to teach in a given school year is a physical impossibility. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) suggest that material worth teaching:

1. has value beyond the classroom
2. is at the heart of the related discipline
3. comprises ideas that are abstract or often misunderstood
4. is potentially engaging

Applying these criteria helps teachers and grade-level teams choose judiciously the standards they will cover in a year, relieving undue pressure and creating more time for students to work with ideas. The point is for students to learn to remember, not just learn for a test.

Strategies to help people learn go back to the very origins of education. While there is still much we do not know, it is clear that knowledge has to be actively acquired by the student and that knowledge the student already has influences new knowledge. It is also clear that individuals learn in a number of ways. Rote memorization is certainly one, but very little information gained that way is retained for any length of time. Students can also learn meaningfully, integrating new concepts into previously acquired knowledge (Novak 2002).

Two important concepts related to this kind of learning are schema and metacognition. A *schema* is the mental framework by which we organize concepts; *metacognition* is being aware of our own thinking processes. Teachers encourage schema building and metacognition by:

- helping students build background knowledge and understanding
- helping students access the background knowledge they already have and use it as a bridge to new learning
- helping students become consciously aware of their thinking processes and the strategies they use to accomplish tasks

Students' background knowledge about content they are learning and the mental connections they make, along with their personal, cultural, and academic experiences, influence their success in learning new material. English language learners must be explicitly taught strategies for becoming

aware of their own thinking and how to apply those strategies to other learning situations.

Building Background Knowledge

Helping students develop background knowledge on a topic involves teaching students to access the information they have stored in memory and add information that is not there. When students do not have the background knowledge necessary to engage with a particular lesson, their motivation declines as the lesson progresses and they are left behind. Teachers need to help them build the necessary schema—the essential mental framework needed to understand the lesson—and make them aware that they need to use that information in school tasks.

What can a teacher do when it is evident students do not have background knowledge? Introducing a variety of materials, leading whole- and small-group discussions, showing video clips, reading aloud, and helping students bridge what they know with new information are all ways to help students understand and store new information in their long-term memories. Students can then organize these pieces of information and increase the number of connections they can make.

LESSON PLAN: BLACK CULTURE TEA PARTY

Grade Level: Fourth through sixth grade

English Language Learner Suitability: Beginning through advanced

Objective: The lesson will prepare students to understand *Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?* by making sense of phrases from the book and posing questions, thus promoting an understanding of African American heritage.

IRA/NCTE English Language Arts Standard 1: Students read a wide range of print and nonprint texts to build an understanding of texts, of themselves, and of the cultures of the United States.

National TESOL Goal 2, Standard 1: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas. Students will use English to interact in the classroom.

Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Explain and give examples of how language, literature, the arts, architecture, other artifacts, traditions, beliefs, values, and behaviors contribute to the development and transmission of culture.

Materials

- A copy of *Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?* (Holman 1999)
- A piece of paper containing a phrase from the text for each student in the class

Overview

Students share small strips of text with one another before reading *Grandpa, Is Everything Black Bad?*, a story about a young African American boy who is coming to terms with his African heritage. This background helps students of any ethnicity relate to the boy's problem and sets the stage for lessons to come.

Procedure

1. Retype the first four or five pages of the book in a large font, double- or triple-spaced. Cut up the text into meaningful bits of information, numbered in sequential order, like this:
 - It's dark, *black* and scary
 - in my bedroom at night.
 - So I hide
 - under the covers
 - when Dad turns out the light.
 - I like watching TV,
 - but sometimes I'm sad,
 - because most white things are good,
 - and most *black* things are bad. (from pages 1 and 2)

 - People wear the color *black*,
 - when somebody dies.
 - They look very sad
 - and have tears in their eyes.
 - "Grandpa, is everything *black* bad?" (from pages 3 and 4).

If you wish, you can glue each strip onto an index card and laminate it.
2. Hand out a numbered slip of paper (or card) to each student.
3. Have each student begin reading his or her line to every other student.

4. Ask the students to freeze. Ask them to predict what they think the book will be about. Ask them to think about the significance of the color black in the story.
5. Have the students form a circle in the order of the numbers on their slips of paper. Then ask them to read their phrases aloud, in order.
6. Now that all the students have heard the beginning of the book, ask them to revise their predictions and talk about aspects of African American culture.

Assessment

Listen to students as they predict and as they pose questions.

Advantages for English Language Learners

Choose the phrases English language learners receive based on their reading ability, and help them practice their phrases before they read them to the other students. This strategy enables students to make sense of the text with the support of other students. This lesson allows English learners more time to process information, and in so doing they make stronger text-to-self connections.

Bridging Past Learning and New Learning

When students already have the mental framework for a lesson in place, teachers must help them connect their prior knowledge and experiences to the new information. This can be accomplished by questioning, charting, journaling, or making direct statements that help students see the bigger picture: “What did we learn yesterday about such and such?” “Let’s take a look at what we charted last week.” The point is to make sure all students have enough understanding to begin the new lesson.

Rumelhart (1980) suggests that for learning to occur, new information has to be integrated with what the learner already knows—that is, linked to students’ personal, cultural, and academic experiences. Teachers often assume that all students in the class have the same background experiences because they all live in America and are about the same age. The reality is that students’ backgrounds can vary dramatically. For example, in a writing assignment teachers may ask students to imagine what it feels like to trudge

through freshly fallen snow or sit on the beach looking at the ocean. English language learners who do not have these experiences, who do not have background knowledge about snow or the beach, will not do well on the assignment because they cannot write about experiences and knowledge they do not have.

In her classroom, Denise needs to connect to the cultural experiences of her Hmong students in order for them to learn. For example, if she were to talk about having a birthday party, celebrating Christmas, or going on vacation as a possible subject for a story, her Hmong students would not be able to make the appropriate connections. So she refers to Hmong cultural experiences as well: family reunions, fishing and hunting, and the seasons and agriculture.

Many times students from culturally diverse backgrounds have a mental framework or visual patterns different from a text's intended audience. English language learners do have experiences and knowledge, but they may differ from the experiences and knowledge other students have and value in school. It is easy for teachers to assume that students who do not understand what they read are ignorant when, in fact, they may have gaps in their learning and/or have developed different schemas. It is up to the teacher to fill the gaps or build bridges to appropriate background knowledge so English language learners can participate fully.

An informative area of teacher research is cognitive processing—how people store and retrieve information. This research reaffirms the importance of helping students develop a “well-connected body of accessible knowledge” (Rosenshine 1997, 217). By making connections between prior information and ideas and what they are currently studying, students can use higher-order thinking skills and see where ideas fit in the larger scheme of things, thus attributing a deeper meaning to their schoolwork.

Cognitive psychologists George Lakoff and Mark Johnson (1980) have studied memory processes and offer some new information on reading, writing, and memory. They have examined metaphor as a tool for thinking and found that people regularly think and converse in metaphor. They cite as examples common metaphors related to war: “His criticisms were *right on target*. He *shot down* all my arguments.” Metaphors rely on our ability to bridge

the new with the known—our ability to use schema. A difficult concept to teach and understand becomes easier when we accept metaphor as a natural extension of the way children think and make sense of their world (Cunningham and Shagoury 2005).

LESSON PLAN: USING METAPHOR

Grade Level: Kindergarten through second grade

English Language Learner Suitability: Beginning through advanced

Objective: This lesson (adapted from Cunningham and Shagoury 2005, 42–67) uses metaphor and a nonfiction book to explain the concept of courage. Children will recognize the similarity between the actions of a tree frog and their own actions.

IRA/NCTE English Language Arts Standard 2: Students read a wide range of literature from many periods in many genres to build an understanding of the many dimensions (e.g., philosophical, ethical, aesthetic) of human experience.

National TESOL Goal 1, Standard 2: To use English to communicate in social settings. Students will interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment.

Materials

- The picture book *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* (Cowley 1999)
- Twelve-inch-by-eighteen-inch drawing paper, folded in half
- Crayons, markers, or colored pencils

Overview

This lesson shows how teachers can take a difficult concept for kindergartners—courage—and have children understand the relationship between two unlike ideas, the similarity between the actions of a tree frog and their own actions. Students are asked to bridge the new with the known.

Procedure

1. Read *Red-Eyed Tree Frog* aloud as the students follow along, looking at the pictures. Afterward, emphasize that the tree frog leads a dangerous life. Every day is a struggle to elude its predators.
2. On a subsequent day, reread the book, asking students to pick an action of a tree frog that they will demonstrate. Some English language learners struggle to find

words to convey what they know. Movement allows them to make sense of what they read or listen to.

3. Have students share their re-creations of frog actions with the class.
4. Focus the students' attention on the actions that show the red-eyed frog demonstrating courage.
5. Ask each student to draw two pictures on a piece of folded paper: on one half, one of the frog's daily courageous acts; on the other, a daily courageous act the student performs.
6. Have each student tell about the two pictures and describe the relationship between the two unlike situations, thus introducing the class to the concept of metaphor.

Assessment

Observe the students to be sure they understand and respond to the movement activity.

Listen to the students explain the relationship between their two drawings and/or evaluate their drawings.

Advantages for English Language Learners

Students show their understanding through actions. Allow them to draw the metaphorical concept without having to explain it orally. This lesson is an example of a more challenging curricula for English learners.

Metacognition

Students tend to rely on the only learning strategy they may know—memorization—to help them succeed in school. Studies show that this is not how we learn, much less how we remember what we have learned. Teachers need to explicitly teach students strategies for learning. This gives them a “heads up” on how to learn and how to use what they know.

Metacognitive strategies encourage students to reflect on their assignments or completed tasks, such as presenting a project, reading a book, or writing the final draft of a paper. Teachers can provide opportunities for students to use and develop metacognitive skills by asking, “What did you gain

from this experience?” or “What would you do differently if you could return to the project?”

Ed Thurston uses a test-debriefing strategy adapted from Weimer (2002). After giving students a unit exam he has created himself, Ed asks them to look carefully at the questions they missed. Then the test debriefing continues with these steps.

1. Ed identifies which questions from the test were based on his class lectures and activities and which were based on the assigned course readings. Which type of question did they miss most often? Were the answers explicitly stated or did they need to make inferences?
2. Students look through their tests and figure out why they missed each question. Did they misread it? Did they not understand it? Did they read into the question information that was not there? Did they not know the answer? Students get a picture of their test-taking skills.
3. Students do a think-pair-share (Kagan 1994). In pairs, students share what they have discovered about their test-taking skills. Each pair of students then shares this same information with another pair of students. This time they work together to place the errors into categories, thus discovering whether, for example, they need to study the content more than the assigned course readings or focus on not reading more into a question than it is explicitly asking.
4. Ed asks students to begin to internalize their learning by writing in their metacognitive journal. One side of a divided page is headed, “What I learned,” the other, “How I came to learn it.”

As a result of this strategy, students become consciously aware of how to prepare for and take tests successfully. They gain control over their thinking about tests and test-taking strategies and can use their strategies to improve their own test-taking skills. It may appear to some students that “some people are just good test takers” and “some are not.” They do not realize that reviewing lecture notes and course readings as well as learning strategies about how to answer questions all come into play. Being a successful test taker is not something left to chance. It is a skill that can be learned.

For any metacognitive strategy to be effective, students must:

1. understand the strategy
2. understand why they need to know it and why it will benefit them
3. be able to think through the strategy process aloud or voice the strategy in their mind
4. see examples of the strategy in use
5. know when and where it is appropriate to use the strategy
6. be able to monitor themselves (Is the strategy working? What should be done if it does not work?)

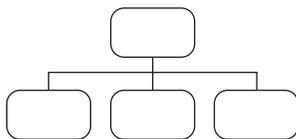
Graphic Organizers

One way teachers can help students make connections and internalize concepts is through graphic organizers. Graphic organizers are concrete, pictorial ways of constructing knowledge and organizing information. They enable students to build, access, bridge, and interconnect what they have learned by converting and compressing a lot of seemingly disjointed information into a structured, simple-to-read graphic display.

Visual diagrams convey complicated information simply. They are critical to student understanding, whether students create them or they are presented as part of the teacher's instruction. Since the words on the organizer are few, students just beginning to learn English can participate in the higher-level thinking required to create it.

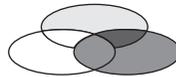
There are different types of graphic organizers for different ways of processing information. They can be used to help students solve problems, make decisions, study, plan research, and brainstorm. There are four basic structures (Griffin and Tulbert 1995).

1. A *hierarchical* structure delineates a concept and its subconcepts.



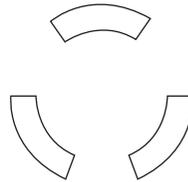
This structure can be used to explore topics that have different levels. It is more commonly referred to as a *tree diagram* and can be used for lineage studies and charting family members.

2. A *sequential* structure delineates events in the order in which they appear or occur (a time line, for example).
3. A *conceptual* structure delineates relationships between different concepts and includes supporting facts and characteristics (and sometimes examples).



Examples of this kind of graphic organizer are the Venn diagram and a web.

4. A *cyclical* structure delineates events or processes that repeat.



Teachers can use modified forms of these four graphic organizers depending on the objective of the lesson.

Figure 4–1 shows how ideas are linked from general to specific, letting students see how new learning interconnects with what they have already learned about the desert.

Let's deconstruct how a teacher and his students created this organizer.

1. They defined the topic. What did they want to know? In this case, they wanted to learn about important desert concepts.
2. They identified and listed the most important general ideas about the topic: "extreme heat," "extreme dryness," "cold nights," "home to living things."
3. They listed general ideas first, then more specific aspects of those ideas. For example, the general idea "home to living things" connects to "plants" and "animals."

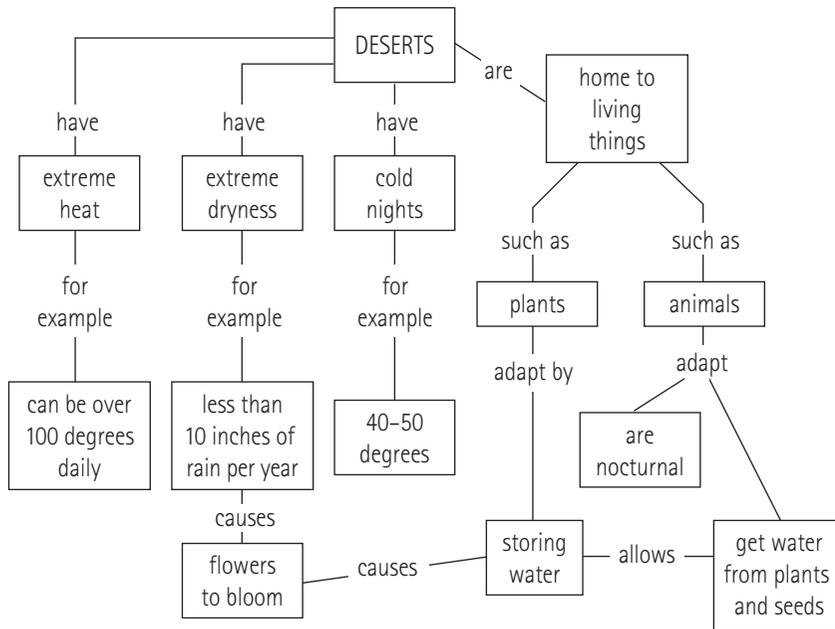


Figure 4.1 Variation of a Hierarchical-Conceptual Graphic Organizer

4. They added links to ideas that are still more specific, using words and phrases that describe relationships. For example, “animals” is linked to “are nocturnal” with the word “adapt,” capturing the idea that becoming nocturnal is how animals have adapted to the desert environment.

They added horizontal cross-links between ideas. For example, at the bottom of the diagram, they linked “flowers to bloom,” “storing water,” and “get water from plants and seeds” to capture the idea that the small amount of rain causes flowers to bloom and plants to store water, which is how animals can get water to survive. (Adapted from Novak and Gowin 1984.) Note that most graphic organizers do not have linking words or cross-links. In this case, both are essential to clarify ideas.

Students need guided practice while learning how to develop graphic organizers. They are a wonderful tool for understanding, but only if students are able to create them themselves. Creating a graphic organizer requires the

following thinking: identify the relationships between the concepts; determine what each relationship means; pick out the most important information; and place each item of information in the proper hierarchy.

The Chapter in a Nutshell

Scaffold: Building schema and metacognition

Teachers help students create frameworks for understanding and consciously think about their own thinking.

Appropriate grade levels: K-2 (modified), 3-5, 6-8

Strategies

Tea party
Metaphor lesson
Test debriefing

Content area

- Social studies
- Math
- Science
- Reading/language arts
- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Language processes

How is it done?

Tea party: Students prepare for a lesson by discussing what they already know about a topic.

Metaphor lesson: Students link new understanding to background knowledge and experiences by discovering how two unrelated experiences are similar.

Test debriefing: Students reflect on their test preparation and test-taking skills and make improvements based on what they discover.

Why is the scaffold important to use?

It fills in gaps in the learning and understanding of English language learners and helps them be conscious of their own role in their learning.



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