Instructional Supports

English Language Learners
Introduction

An introduction to working with English Language Learners in a North Carolina classroom.
Definitions and Terms

Common Acronyms
TESOL: Teaching English to speakers of other languages. Refers to programs that train teachers to teach English language learners.

ESL: English as a second language. Refers to programs, classes, and teachers that help English language learners learn English.

ELL: English language learner. Refers to a person who is learning English as a second language.

LEP: Limited English proficiency/proficient. Refers to a person who is learning a second language. A less preferred term but still used in states like North Carolina as an official designation for students that are eligible for ESL services and exemptions.

L1: First language. The language that someone already knows.

L2: Second language or target language. The language that someone is learning.

Approaches to ESL
Submersion: An approach to teaching ESL where the ELL is in content area classes with non-ELLs. This can be done with or without specific ESL support.
Pull-out: Where ELLs are pulled out of class to work specifically on learning English, usually with an ESL teacher.

Push-in/Inclusion: Where ELLs are kept in their regular content area classes but with the help from an ESL teacher, who is in the class with the students.

Sheltered Instruction: Where ELLs are taught both English and one content area together in class. This class can be comprised of only ELLs or of a mix of ELLs and non-ELLs.

Bilingual Education: Education in two languages. In the US, this usually means education in English and the students’ L1.

**Aspects of language**

Phonology: The sounds system of a language.

Morphology: The way letters form words (or parts of words) in a language.

Syntax: The way words go together in a language. The way words can make phrases and sentences.

Semantics: Word choice and appropriateness in a language.

Pragmatics

Discourse

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**Key Concepts in Second Language Acquisition**

Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) vs. Separate Underlying Proficiency

Language Interdependence

Language Transfer

Context-Embeddedness

Context Embedded/Reduced

Cognitively Undemanding/Demanding

Types of English (formerly BICS and CALP)

Communicative

Academic

**Scaffolding**

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

Aspects of Scaffolding

Continuity: Tasks are repeated, with variations and connected to one another (e.g. as part of projects).
Contextual support: Exploration is encouraged in a safe, supportive environment; access to means and goals is promoted in a variety of ways.

Intersubjectivity: Mutual engagement and rapport are established; there is encouragement and nonthreatening participation in a shared community of practice.

Contingency: Task procedures are adjusted depending on actions of learners; contributions and utterances are oriented towards each other and may be co-constructed (or, see below, vertically constructed).

Handover/takeover: There is an increasing role for the learner as skills and confidence increase; the teacher watches carefully for the learner’s readiness to take over increasing parts of the action.

Flow: Skills and challenges are in balance; participants are focused on the task and are ‘in tune’ with each other.
To start, let’s go over some terms used to describe the students who are English language learners and the most common approaches to teaching them in US schools.

First, the terms for students. Often, the acronyms ESL, LEP, and ELL are used interchangeably. However, it is important to know that the term ESL, which stands for English as a second language, describes the programs that schools use to teach English language learners and not the students themselves. Public schools in North Carolina designate students as eligible for ESL services, so then many school personnel end up using the term for the students as well, i.e, ESL students.

A more appropriate term to use for students is English language learner and its acronym, ELL. So, instead of talking about my ESL students I would talk about my ELL students or simply my ELLs.
To Label Students, North Carolina Does Not Always Use The Term ELL But Also A Similar Term, LEP, Which Stands For Limited English Proficient. Many States And The ESL Profession Itself Have Abandoned This Term Since It Has A Somewhat Negative Connotation In That Focuses On What Students Do Not Know Rather Than What They Are Learning. (Some States Have Actually Even Abandoned The Term ELL, But We Will Not Get Into That Here).

For This And All Subsequent Modules, We Will Use The Term ELL To Refer To Students Whose First Language Is Not English And Who Are Still Learning English.

So, Now That We Know The Basic Way To Identify Our ELLs, We Can Go Over The Most Common Approaches To Teaching Them. We Have Already Learned The Term ESL. This Is A Broad Term That Usually Refers To Any Class, Program, Or Approach Designed To Teach ELLs. Under This Umbrella Term There Are More Specific Models/aproaches:

The first “model” of teaching ELLs is actually not a model of all. Submersion is the practice of placing ELLs in mainstream classes with no kind of ESL support. This approach is sometimes referred to as “sink or swim,” as it is up to the students themselves to success despite their English language proficiency. The most common model for serving ELLs in North Carolina is a combination of submersion and pull-out. Pull-out is when ELLs are pulled out from their mainstream classes to work with an ESL teacher for one or more class periods. So, a high school student may have several of his or her content area classes but also be pulled from one or two of them to have an ESL class.
Pull-Out

Though it is the most common approach, pull out plus submersion is not the most effective for teaching ELLs. We will get into the details of what works for ELLs later in this module.
Push-in/ Inclusion

Luckily, there are other approaches for teaching ELLs that are becoming more common. One of these is the inclusion, or push-in, approach. Inclusion is when ELLs are put into mainstream content area classes and are given ESL services within the class. An ESL teacher would come into the class and give support to the ELLs in, for example, a math or biology class. Ideally, an inclusion approach involves the content area and ESL teacher planning lessons together so that the ELL student academic and language needs are addressed in the lessons. To facilitate this approach, sometime ELL students are clustered together. Clustering is when a group of LL students are put together into the same content area class. The idea is that the ESL teacher will be able to support the teacher in working with this group of students (and help teacher in planning for their specific needs) instead of having to work with several teachers.
Sheltered Instruction

Another approach that is becoming more common (and is sometimes used in conjunction to inclusion) is sheltered instruction. There are various ways to design sheltered instruction but generally what it refers to is when teaching ELL students subject areas curriculum and English language at the same time. So a sheltered high school biology course would teach students the required curriculum in biology but be adapted to meet the needs of ELLs. All unit and lesson plans would have both biology and English language development objectives. Often, sheltered instruction classes can include a mix of ELL and non-ELL students, but they can also be made up of ELLs exclusively. A positive aspect of sheltered instruction is that, by attending to subject area and language goals at the same time, a rigorous curriculum can be maintained. Another positive aspect is that it can help teachers use context-embedded language, a concept that is discussed under the USEFUL CONCEPTS ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION section. One issue that can occur with sheltered instruction is that it may be hard to develop a sheltered instruction class—in Biology say—with students and very different levels of English language proficiency or literacy (in English of the students’ first language). Also, depending on how the class is titled or the resources that are used, the class may not carry high school credit in a course like Biology, which would hurt the students’ chances of graduating as they would have to take extra courses. So, sheltered instruction is often used with other models of teaching ELLs.
Less common in North Carolina is actual bilingual education. Bilingual education approaches have the goals of teaching ELL students in English and in their first language. There are many models for bilingual education. Transitional models are those that use ELLs’ first language for part of their instruction in early grades and that then transition to using only English later on. The idea is that the first language is a tool to help them learn until they can rely only on English. For various reasons that we will get into when we discuss the key concepts of language acquisition later in this module, transition approaches are not the most effective. Better for ELLs are enrichment models to bilingual education. These are models where ELLs continue to learn in both English and throughout their education. When done well, they have the goals of becoming bilingual and biliterate, i.e. that they will be able to read and write in both languages. These models are the most successful.
Summary

So, think about how this information is useful for you as a content-area teacher. While you now know that bilingual education is the most effective approach for teaching ELLs, your school or district may not have the resources for a full bilingual model. Furthermore, you may now or soon have ELLs in your class and want to know how to best teach them without those resources. There are at least two things you can do. One, you can advocate for more inclusion approaches (rather than over-relying on pull-out) and coordinating with ESL teachers to plan and even carry out lessons that include the language, academic, and cognitive skills that your ELLs needs. Two, you can get support from ESL teachers and other professionals to provide ELLs access to content in their first languages. You can even try to find that content yourself. The important caveat here is that that content should be as age and grade appropriate as possible. So, if you are not proficient enough those students’ first languages to ascertain that, you will need to find people who are able to do so. In addition, you can advocate at the district level for more first language resources for your ELLs.

In the next sections, we will learn about the aspects of language and about some of the key concepts of second language acquisition. This information will help you understand your ELL students—especially in terms of their language proficiency and needs—and to advocate for more resources and appropriate instructional approaches for them.
Many people think about language as something you know or don’t know. There are actually many parts to knowing to language and to be fluent, we have to piece all those parts together into meaningful communication. The aspects of language are:

- Phonology
- Morphology/Lexicon
- Syntax
- Semantics
- Pragmatics
- Discourse
The first part, or aspect, of language is phonology. Phonology refers to the sound part of knowing a language – i.e., knowing which sounds go together and how they determine and affect meaning. Garcia (2002) refers to having phonological knowledge of English as:

“Knowledge of English sounds and the ways sounds are combined, stress and intonation, graphemes, and spelling” (213).

So phonology refers to what sounds are used in English and how. It also refers to how letters (graphemes) are associated with certain sounds. For example in English the vowel sounds in “beet” and “bit” signify a different meaning in the word. We distinguish between the long “E” sound in “beet” and the short “I” sounds in “bit.” However, many Spanish speakers will not distinguish between those two sounds as they do not signify a change in meaning in Spanish (in fact the short “I” sounds is not used in Spanish). An ELL will have to know what sounds are and aren’t used in English and how to associate letters with sounds (i.e., how “ee” is often pronounced with a long “E” sounds and “i” is sometimes pronounced as the short “I” sound). Of course this gets complicated because these letters can signify other sounds as well (e.g., “Beethoven” and “bite,” respectively).
The next aspect of language is morphology. Morphology refers to words (or parts of words). That is to say, it refers to combinations of letters, called morphemes, that have meaning in a language. For instance, in English the word “bike” is a morpheme that signifies a specific thing. We also have words that are combinations of morphemes, like “bicycle,” which contains the morpheme “bi-” and “cycle,” both of which carry their own meaning. So, ELLs will have to learn both morphemes like bike that can stand on their own—called root words (e.g., “bike”)—and those that need to be combined with root words to be used (e.g., “bi-”).
The next aspect of language is syntax, or grammar. The syntax of a language refers to the rules that govern how words can be put together to form sentences. In English, there are rules that govern, for instance, where adjectives can go in a sentence. Two common places where adjectives can go in English are before the noun they describe (e.g., “the happy boy”) or after the verb “to be” (e.g. “the boy is happy”). Other languages, like Spanish, can have different rule to govern where adjectives go (in Spanish they can go just after, not before, the words they describe). So, an ELL might understand a lot of words but might not yet be proficient in some aspects of English syntax, i.e., they might not be able to always put those words in the proper place in a sentence.
The next aspect of language related to word is semantics. Semantics refers to word choice and the appropriateness of using one word instead of another. We can put together syntactically correct sentences but that does not make their meaning accurate. For example, we can make the sentence, “Schools drive sweetly.” This sentence has a noun followed by a verb (in the correct verb form) followed by an adverb. This would fit English syntax, or grammar, but its meaning is not comprehensible. Schools don’t drive and driving sweetly does not make sense. So, students need to understand the meaning of words and how to put them together to make meaningful sentences. In another example, an ELL student might write, “Americans drive repetitively.” Again, the syntax is accurate. The semantic meaning is also getting closer to be accurate as well. However, more easily understood words—instead of “repetitively”—might be “regularly,” “daily,” or “frequently.” These might better convey the student’s intending meaning a more appropriately. So, semantics is about both accuracy and appropriateness of word choice when making phrases and sentences.
Next is pragmatics. Pragmatics refers to “not only the rules of the language itself but generally accepted notions about appropriateness and effective use” (Garcia 2002), 182. For instance, English syntax can distinguish between a statement—e.g., “The window is open”—and a request or command—e.g., “Please open the window.” Pragmatic knowledge is understanding how statements can actually be used as requests or how requests can be structured in more or less direct ways. For instance, if a teacher walks into the classroom of students and the school rule is that the windows stay closed, the teacher could say, “Oh, the window is open,” signaling to the students to close the window. Thus the teacher is actually using a descriptive statement as a request. The teacher could be what more direct and say to one student, “Can you close the window?” On the surface level, it would look like the teacher is asking the student about his or her ability to close the window. The pragmatics of English, however, tells us that again the teacher is making a request or command to the student. The teacher want the window closed and is not concerned with the student’s ability to do the task. In each of these cases, the teacher means to imply the command, “Close the window.” While this might be the most direct way of getting across the intended meaning, according to English pragmatics that could come off as rude. So, descriptive statements and questions are used to be more polite. An ELL might not understand the pragmatic meaning of such utterance and thus be confused.
when responding to them. He or she might know all the words but not pick up on the underlying intended meaning. So, a teacher needs to recognize that and to be able to help students understand and use English in a way that adheres to English pragmatics. It is important to note that pragmatics is based on culture. It might be very appropriate in one language (like some forms of Spanish) to simply say, “Close the window.” In many parts of the US, that could seem rude. However, based on each culture, the speaker may in fact be considered polite. So, it is also important for teachers of ELLs to be careful about how they interpret ELL students’ use of English.
The last aspect of language we will look at is discourse. Discourse is similar to pragmatics but also implies the ability to use the appropriate language in the appropriate context. We will not go into all the elements of discourse here but it refers to the ability to use the language in context. For example, a native English speaker may understand that there are different ways of speaking (different registers) that are used when speaking to an authority figure as compared to a friend. A native English speaker might know that more formal language would be used when giving a report in school as compared to talking with his or her peers at lunchtime. However, a lot of background knowledge of the context and culture of those different discourse settings is needed to be able to distinguish between the kind of language used in those two situations. Depending on his or her level of English language proficiency, an ELL would most likely need assistance or time to be able to make decisions about what words (semantics), grammatical structure (syntax), and appropriate in each of those situations. Again, it is important to note that discourse, like pragmatics, is cultural. For instance, in some languages you might use formal titles and indirect language (to be polite) even in what would be considered an informal setting to an English speaker. Conversely, a student may use a tone that would be considered polite in his or her first language but that comes across as rude in English. Teachers of ELLs must be aware of these potential differences so that they don’t misinterpret and negatively judge
students’ intended meaning and to help them use English in ways that are considered appropriate in the context of US schools and society.
So, when we are talking about knowing a language, or in the case of ELLs when we are talking about what a student might not be doing accurately, we can be referring to any aspect or combination of aspects of the English language. A teacher’s ability to focus in on what a student is and is not able to do accurately, appropriately, or fluently can be very useful when working with ELLs. Furthermore, these aspects of language are developed naturally and over time. “Formal instruction cannot speed up the natural developmental process, but it can facilitate it” (Ovando, Combs, and Collier 2006, 135). For instance, a Spanish speaker will not automatically be able to hear the difference between the “ee” in “beet” and the “i” in “bit” right away, even if a teacher explains it. A teacher can teach the concept and help the student recognize that difference over time through exposure and carefully-planned lessons that help the student develop his/her phonological awareness in English. Similarly, an ELL might not understand when a command—e.g., “Close the window”—is too direct, i.e., impolite. A teacher can explain that example and provide some rules that govern appropriate use of sentence structure to produce polite requests, but it will take time for the student to internalize and use those rules consistently. Again, the teacher’s role is to understand these different aspects of language so as to provide well-planned lessons that include sufficient exposure and opportunities to use English. We will get more into this when we discuss scaffolding below. For now, it is just important to think
about and be aware of how your knowledge of these different aspects of language can help you identify what your ELLs may be doing well and where they might need assistance.
There are very many theories that help describe how a second language is acquired, or learned. We will go over three of those theories: 1) language interdependence, 2) academic language, and 3) context embeddedness.
The concept of language interdependence—or the language interdependence hypothesis—states that first language (L1) development actually aids, rather than impedes, second language (L2) development. As Ovando, Combs, and Collier (2006) explain:

> Academic skills, literacy, development, concept formation, subject knowledge, and learning strategies all transform from L1 to L2 as the vocabulary and communicative patterns are developed in L2 to express that academic knowledge. (130)

This contradicts the view that some people (like critics of bilingual education) have that by continuing to develop and learn in a first language like Spanish will impede the learning of English. These critics often think of the brain as having separate areas that are used to develop each separate language. That view of the human brain might look like this:

This model promotes the idea that there are separate areas of the brain that work on each language. However extensive research—especially the work of Jim Cummins (2001)—has not supported this view. Rather, a more accurate model of the human brain with regard to language development would look like this:
This model shows that there is a common underlying proficiency (CUP) for both languages (Cummins, 2001). While the surface features of separate languages—e.g., Spanish and English—are different (after all, Spanish and English have different phonologies, words, grammar, etc.), underlying both is a general language proficiency.
Academic Language

Schools use a particular type of language, generally speaking called academic language. Academic language is distinguished between what we might consider conversational or social language. Garcia (2002) refers to it as “the specific types of literacy that students need to achieve for academic purposes” (208). Even though social language can be highly complex and some aspects of it can take a long time to learn, it is somewhat different than a lot of the language in school settings. “In social language, meaning is negotiated through a wide range of contextual clues cues, such as non-verbal messages in face-to-face interaction or written feedback in a letter from a friend or an email message.” Academic language can include a wide range of types of language and it can have much less of that contextual support (and we will look more at context in the next section). Academic language can also take a lot longer to become proficient in. Different types of programs to teach English affect acquisition in somewhat different ways, but in general when ELLs are taught in only English, it takes them 5 to 10 years to reach grade level proficiency in academic language and takes longer if they are not as fully literate in their first language (Ovando, Combs, and Collier, 2006). This is important for teachers to know because on the surface it can appear that an ELL is proficient in social language after a shorter time. Teachers may then assume that the ELL has “acquired” English or at least enough to do well in school. However, it is clear that academic language takes longer to
learn so ELLs will still need English language support even if it seems from causal conversation that the student is proficient.

There are a couple of aspects to academic English that can lead to it taking longer to learn and being more difficult for ELLs. First, academic English involves reacting to texts in specific ways. These ways include but are not limited to reading. They can also involve talking about and listening to others talk about texts as well. Just some of these ways of responding to text—as discussed by Garcia (2002) are the following: summarizing, extracting meaning, evaluating evidence and arguments, recognizing textual conventions, or interpreting word problems.

Second, Garcia points out that ELLs often are not prepared for the linguistic demands of these texts since they have not have the same exposure to issue or the same level of proficiency in English yet. Even proficiency in social English helps English as first language speakers develop their academic English. So, it is important in developing ELLs academic English to also develop their social English. As Ovando, Collier, and Comes (2006) state, “A good teacher incorporates social and academic language development into every lesson” (). However, as we will see when we discuss scaffolding later, just because may not be prepared for the level of language that academic texts can contain it is important for teachers not to “dumb down” the curriculum for ELLs. To do so would never enable them to catch up to their peers. Rather, teachers need to include goals and objectives that address their ELLs’ linguistic needs into all their lessons.

To assist ELLs with the demands of academic English, Garcia (2002) recommends the following:

1. Teachers provide students with ample exposure to academic English.
2. Teachers get students to attend closely to the features of academic English.
3. Teachers provide direct, explicit language instruction.
4. Teachers provide multiple assessments of ELL's academic English.

The next concept—context embeddedness—can also help give teachers an idea of how they can attend to academic English in all their lessons and activities and how they can help ELLs access the same high level course content and, when possible, the same readings.
The role of context in second language acquisition is extremely important. Learning a language is easier when it involves interacting in real situations. We might see that when ELLs are in gym or at lunch, they can communicate in English more easily than when they are taking a test or asked to speak in class to give an answer. That conversation language is used within a context that helps the ELL learn and use the right terminology and language structure. In the gym there are the rules of the game, pointing, physical actions that the students can follow, etc. At lunch, there is actual food to discuss and students are discussing their own lives. This type of language is distinct from the academic language that they have to use in class. This conversational language is also more embedded in the context of the moment. In addition, this language is often less cognitively demanding than academic language. These facts help learners learn conversational language more quickly.

So, why is this important for teachers? First, teachers can use students’ conversational language to help them acquire academic language. They can help students translate from conversational ways of saying things to more academic ways. In addition, teachers can make sure to use as much context as possible when designing and implementing lessons. This can include providing a lot of background knowledge about a topic up front (front loading) or designing projects where students have to create something real (or at least realistic). Importantly,
it includes making connections to students’ lives. Teachers can design lessons so that the knowledge and language they are learning is presented in a way so that it is something that can be used in or is at least relevant to their lives now.

Let’s look at the following chart:

What teachers want to do is to use students abilities from Quadrant A—that context embedded cognitively undemanding language—to move to Quadrant B—where language is still embedded in context but is more cognitively demanding. At times, teachers can even use what students can do in Quadrant A to move to Quadrant C—where there is less context but that the language demand is easier for the students to handle. This can help them learn, for example, skills that might help them in testing situations. To do this, however, teachers still need to help them then bridge to Quadrant D, and working from Quadrant A to B and then to D is usually the most effective way to do this. By being context embedded, ELLs actually have a better chance to acquire the academic English.

Beyond the idea of the specific type of language they can use, embedding language in the contexts of students’ lives helps their academic identity (Walqui, 2006). It sends the message that they are important, that they have something important to say, and that they have the right to say it. The next concept, scaffolding, can explain more why context embeddedness is important and can start to show how English language learning can be structured in a way to move from less to more cognitively demanding (i.e., academic) language.
So, let’s take an introductory look at the idea of scaffolding, which will be covered in much more detail in subsequent modules.
First, the definition of scaffolding is:

“a process of ‘setting up’ the situation to make the child’s entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it. (Bruner, 1983: 60)” quoted in Walqui (2006, 163).

Scaffolding is based on the fact that the “basis for all learning is social interaction” (Walqui, 2006, 162). The idea is that before a child can internalize meaning, he or she must be able to understand and use it in a social interaction. So, learning has to take place with as much interaction as possible. This is not to say that there should be no solitary assignments but rather that even those assignments should be connected to more context-embedded lessons and be for the purposes of more realistic and meaningful communication. That would mean, for example, that even a writing assignment should be focused on ideas, information, and language that the students has had the chance to use in interaction (with peers and the teacher) and should be for the purpose of furthering that interaction in some way.

Why is interaction so important? Walqui (2006) explains the idea of the zone of proximal development (ZPD), based on Vygotsty’s (1978) work. The ZPD refers to the amount (of knowledge, skill, language, etc.) that students can learn if they have the right kind of support. In social interaction, communication is supported people mediating meaning together.
In the previous example, scaffolding has various features that help the students expand their knowledge. In scaffolding for ELLS, there are six features that can help the teacher both plan and implement his or her lessons.

These features come from Walqui (2006) based on the work of van Lier (2004).

**Continuity**

Tasks are repeated, with variations and connected to one another (e.g. as part of projects).

**Contextual support**

Exploration is encouraged in a safe, supportive environment; access to means and goals is promoted in a variety of ways.

**Intersubjectivity**

Mutual engagement and rapport are established; there is encouragement and nonthreatening participation in a shared community of practice.

**Contingency**

Task procedures are adjusted depending on actions of learners; contributions and utterances are oriented towards each other and may be co-constructed (or vertically constructed).

**Handover/takeover**

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Imagine Children Learning A Game In Gym Class. The Teacher Can Point To Where Students Need To Go, Show Them The Ball, Model The Proper Actions, Etc. In That Case The Gym Teacher Can Also Include The “technical” Language Of The Game. This Is One Way That Students Can Learn Knowledge And Language. The Teacher Is The More Capable Adult That Can Help The Student Not Only Learn The Rules Of The Game And How To Play But Can Extend Their Vocabulary As Well. However, Extending Students ZPD Does Not Only Come With The Help Of More Capable Adult. The Students Also Learn From Each Other. As The Students Play The Game They Negotiate On Whether Or Not They Are Playing Correctly, Whose Turn It Is, How They Should Work Together, Etc. When That Happens The Teacher Can Act More Of A Facilitator To Extend What The Students Find Out Together And Give Them Support Little By Little To Improve Their Skills. By Interacting And Playing The Game Together, The Students Learn More Than Just The Teacher Explaining The Game.
There is an increasing role for the learner as skills and confidence increase; the teacher watches carefully for the learner’s readiness to take over increasing parts of the action.

Flow

Skills and challenges are in balance; participants are focused on the task and are ‘in tune’ with each other.

We can see in the example of the game in gym class that these features, if evident, help the students not only play the game but also to potentially learn how to play it on their own or even teach it to others. By incorporating these six features, teachers in traditional classrooms can similarly expand students ZPD on academic knowledge and language.

Walqui (2006) explains that in addition to learning more from capable adults and peers (those kids that are more skilled in a certain area students can learn from more), student can also learn from equally capable and even less capable peers. Teaching a skill requires using language in a way that requires them to use what they know and also to adapt their language to help someone learn. Even the times when students learn on their own the students can learn by drawing on what they know and have learned if the assignment is connected to larger assignments, projects, lessons, etc. that involve context-embedded language and negotiating meaning with others.

In each of these cases, the teachers can provide assistance—which can include new concepts, language forms, or specific pieces of information—in order to move students from what they already know to learning more. For ELLs, that includes moving from their current language ability to developing more language and especially towards developing more academic English.

A teacher therefore can use scaffolding in the following ways:

1. They can structure lessons that are based in the students lives and that are directed to address the language needs of their ELLs.

2. They can gear the majority of their lessons to having students interact with each other so that they are required to negotiate meaning to accomplish the goals of the lesson. (Here it is important for the teacher to remember that scaffolding for ELLs, like for all students, is contingent, collaborative and interactive [Walqui 2006]).

3. As students learn and interact, they can feed the necessary knowledge, skills, language that can help the student better negotiate meaning and that can push them from the language they know to new language.

Throughout each of these levels, the teacher can use what he/she has learned about the aspects of language, the role of first
language in English language development, and the need to move from conversational to academic language via context-embedded language. As the student is more and more capable, the teacher can slowly remove any extra support for students and let them takeover the process of negotiating meaning.
Links & References


