A substantial body of research clearly indicates that utilizing specific instructional modifications as well as targeted pedagogical strategies can accelerate ELLs' academic achievement and English language acquisition. As a result, ELLs' academic performance can be comparable to their English proficient (EP) counterparts.

This document is intended to inform educators on insights and practical suggestions for accelerating the academic achievement of ELLs in literacy classrooms, specifically in the following areas:

I. Vocabulary

II. Scaffolding

III. Native Language

IV. Writing

Vocabulary Instruction

Because vocabulary is a key element of comprehension and often presents an additional challenge for ELLs, it is crucial that vocabulary be taught using various modes of instruction. Choosing which words to teach ELLs is as important as knowing how to teach them. Therefore, vocabulary selections should be made in accordance with specific questions and tasks set forth by a specific unit and include the words that students need to know in order to reach the objectives of the lesson and, ultimately, the goal of the unit. There should be a balance between the words and concepts that are crucial for students' understanding of the text and the words required to produce written and/or oral pieces. Further scaffolding and explicit teaching may be necessary for some students. Also, teachers should shift the focus from having students memorize all unfamiliar words to providing them with strategies that they can use independently to construct meaning.

Although each discipline has its own set of content-specific words, a language arts teacher will also need to teach words that are essential to the organization of ideas, such as transition words. According to Kate Kinsella (2005), teachers need to set clear priorities as to what words should be taught. Here are some guidelines that may help with selecting which words to teach:

- Big idea words as they relate to lesson concepts
- High-frequency, academic words
- High-use, content-specific words
- Words to engage in literate discourse about a topic

Also, there are several components of teaching vocabulary effectively. For instance, there is a process for teaching new words to ELLs that promotes ownership of the words, which includes clearly delineated instructions for teachers and describes student behaviors to optimize learning (adapted from Kate Kinsella).

- **Suggested steps:**
  1. Explicitly teach 5 to 7 words per lesson
  2. Provide examples of the target words within the context of the lesson

3. Teach word relationships, such as cognates, synonyms, antonyms, multiple meanings, roots, affixes, etc
4. Expose students to target words multiple times

- **Student behavior:**
  1. Expressing definitions in their own words
  2. Recording the words, their definitions, and their visual representations, if possible
  3. Learning to use the words by talking, comparing, analyzing, and writing
  4. Reinforcing the words through learning activities that require discourse

Finally, depending on the composition of the class or the teacher's modification of the tasks, there may be a need to introduce more words. Teachers are encouraged to use the guiding principles of effective vocabulary instruction developed by Dr. Catherine Snow. These principles of effective vocabulary instruction are integral to assisting students in building academic vocabulary skills:

1. **Pick generative (Tier II) words**: These words lend themselves to further investigation and study and connect to subject matter as well as other words. Words that fall into this category may include *government, election, register, fund-raising, ballot, supply, reaction*.
2. **Choose words that are essential to the lesson/unit**: It is not possible to teach every word that a student will encounter in the lesson; teachers should select those words that allow students to access a text and are crucial to understanding concepts. Therefore, it may be necessary to teach ELLs those Tier I words that English proficient students already know well.
3. **Present words in semantically rich contexts:** Discipline-specific instruction provides many opportunities for words to be illustrated in context. A teacher may choose to engage students as active learners in activities that support the students' understanding and retention of the word and its meaning. For example, the word "propaganda" can be illustrated by having students create posters and/or advertisements that espouse a particular point of view or message. These are typically Tier III words.
4. **Provide learner-friendly definitions:** Use language that students are familiar with by providing an example, an explanation, or a description. Avoid formal definitions.
5. **Elicit student definitions**: Allow students to generate their own descriptions, definitions, or examples for a particular word. Students may also represent their work in visual form (pictorial, image, example/non-example).
6. **Ensure recurrent exposures**: Research shows that a student needs to be exposed to a new word at least six times before that word may be retained. Allow for multiple exposures to a term or concept by allowing students time to write, talk, and read about it.
7. **Encourage experimentation but expect mistakes:** All students need time to internalize and master new words (especially academic words). Teachers can assist in this process by posing questions, modeling, doing think-alouds, and encouraging historical habits of mind.
8. **Expand each word's semantic mapping:** Relate words to a familiar context visually (semantic map, concept definition map, Frayer Model, semantic features map, historical character traits map, etc.).

9. **Provide opportunities to use the words:** This includes providing opportunities to use words in real-life contexts (peer-to-peer talks, debates, editorials, etc.)
10. **Teach word learning strategies:** As explained above, these may include explicitly pointing out word parts, the morphology of a word, cognates, and using various kinds of context clues.

Teachers are encouraged to utilize these principles of instruction as they teach the targeted vocabulary in each lesson.

Scaffolding: A Tool to Accessibility
In order to be successful members of a rigorous academic environment, ELLs need scaffolds to help them access the curriculum. These scaffolds are temporary, and the process of constructing them and then removing them when they are no longer needed is what makes them a valuable tool in the education of ELLs. The original definition of scaffolding comes from Jerome Bruner (1983). He defines scaffolding as "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."

The scaffolds used in this unit are strategically placed to teach specific skills and language. Once students learn these skills and gain the needed linguistic and content knowledge, these scaffolds are no longer needed. Nevertheless, each child moves along his/her own continuum, and while one child may no longer need the scaffolds, other students may still depend on them. Thus, constant evaluation of the process is an inevitable step in assuring that scaffolds are used successfully.

The scaffolding types necessary for ELLs are modeling, activating and bridging prior knowledge and/or experiences, text representation, metacognitive development, contextualization, and building schema[1]:
1. **Modeling:** finished products of prior students' work, teacher-created samples, sentence starters, writing frameworks, shared writing, etc.
2. **Activating and bridging prior knowledge and/or experiences:** using graphic organizers, such as anticipatory guides, extended anticipatory guide, semantic maps, interviews, picture walk discussion protocols, think-pair-share, KWL, etc.
3. **Text representation:** transforming a piece of writing into a pictorial representation, changing one genre into another, etc.
4. **Metacognitive development:** self assessment, think aloud, asking clarifying questions, using a rubric for self evaluation, etc.
5. **Contextualization:** metaphors, realia, pictures, audio and video clips, newspapers, magazines, etc.
6. **Building Schema:** bridging prior knowledge and experience to new concepts and ideas, etc.

Native Language Support
Full proficiency in the native language leads to higher academic gains in English. Because general structural and functional characteristics of language transfer, allowing second language learners access to content in the native language provides them with a way to construct meaning in English. In order to assist ELLs, the strategic use of the native language can be incorporated into English instruction as a support structure to

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[1] Walqui, A., *Scaffolding Instruction for English Language Learners: A Conceptual Framework*, retrieved from http://www.educacion.gob.es/exterior/centros/losangeles/es/series/201003-Scaffolding-Walqui.pdf.

clarify, build prior knowledge, extend comprehension, and bridge experiences. This can be integrated into a teacher's instructional practice through the following: technology, human resources (e.g., paraprofessionals, peers, and parents), native language materials, and flexible grouping.

Writing
English Language Learners in all grades and at all proficiency levels should be exposed to a variety of writing experiences. They should be given opportunities to write for both informal and formal purposes. ELLs should be exposed to a variety of writing genres across all subject areas. At the beginning level, students can copy or fill in the blanks within a template or writing frame, and they can write sentences or brief paragraphs. However, over time they should be supported toward developing extended writing pieces that are comparable in both content and style as well as complexity to those written by their grade-level peers. Teachers can support students in this process through a variety of learning activities that include the use of graphic organizers, writing frames, and sentence starters. Teachers may support ELLs through the use of focused minilessons that target specific areas as well as guided writing practice and collaborative writing opportunities.

ELLs need to be exposed to exemplary writing models in English. They should be provided explicit instruction in creating appropriate grade-level writing in various genres (expository, narrative, argument, etc). Lessons should include instruction of academic words and phrases essential to academic discourse. Newcomer ELLs may have different levels and types of prior experiences with academic writing in their native languages. Therefore, they may need additional support in writing appropriate topic sentences, thesis statements, supporting details, and introductory and concluding paragraphs. They may need to be taught to use appropriate transition words and create complex sentences that require a variety of dependent and independent clauses. Student writing is expected to have original content, vocabulary, and style. Cultural differences in writing discourse may influence students' approaches to writing in English. For example, the order of ideas and arguments within an argument essay in English may be significantly different than that which is in the ELLs' native languages. This should be taken into account when scaffolding writing instruction and providing feedback to student writing.

ELLs should be encouraged to write in their native languages as needed based on their proficiency levels, at any stage in the writing process. Teachers should consider the students' native languages as they pair or group students to peer edit, so that students can discuss their ideas in their native language. To further support ELLs, teachers can provide students with writing checklists in the native language in addition to English. A peer with a higher level of English proficiency or a teacher proficient in the ELLs' native language can guide them to write their responses in English.

Teachers should monitor ELLs throughout the writing experience. ELLs will benefit from goal setting activities that give them clear, specific, reachable goals for their writing. These activities provide students with pathways for accomplishing their goals and ensuring that they clearly understand the expectations. Teachers can support ELLs by providing genre-specific rubrics that help them focus on content and the particular area in which they are currently developing language and literacy.

All of these instructional supports must be incorporated as needed into the writing process in order to make the process meaningful to each ELL. Therefore, teachers should recognize that the approach they choose will

not be the same for all ELLs as the supports must be tailored to individual students' academic and linguistics needs.

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