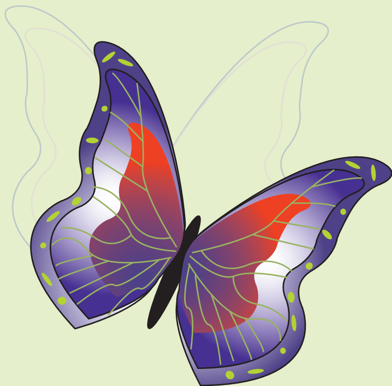
Leading With Diversity:

CULTURAL COMPETENCIES FOR TEACHER PREPARATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PART III:

Language



Elise Trumbull
Maria Pacheco

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The Education Alliance at Brown University
222 Richmond Street, Suite 300
Providence, RI 02903-4226

Phone: 800.521.9550
Fax: 401.421.7650
E-mail: info@alliance.brown.edu
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Pacific Resources for Education and Learning
900 Fort Street Mall, Suite 1300
Honolulu, HI 96813-3718

Phone: 808.441.1300 (Toll-free) 800.377.4773
Fax: 808.441.1385 (Toll-free) 888.512.7599
E-mail: askprel@prel.org
Web: www.prel.org

About the Authors

Dr. Elise Trumbull is an applied psycholinguist whose research addresses the relationships among language, culture, and schooling. She directed the Bridging Cultures project at WestEd from 1996–2004, where she also collaborated on assessment research on English language learners. She is the author of five books, including *Bridging Cultures Between Home and School*, *Assessment Alternatives for Diverse Classrooms*, and *Language and Learning: What Teachers Need to Know*.

Dr. Maria Pacheco is the director of the Equity and Diversity programs at The Education Alliance. She has 28 years of experience addressing issues of cultural diversity in urban schools and higher education. As a researcher, teacher, and program director, she has worked extensively in the areas of equity pedagogy, curriculum development, English language learners, literacy, and minority parent and community involvement. She is the co-author of *Claiming Opportunities: A Handbook for Improving Education Through Comprehensive School Reform* and *Approaches to Writing Instruction for Late-Adolescent English Language Learners*.

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Authors: Elise Trumbull and Maria Pacheco
Editor: Cynthia Way
Designer: Patricia McGee

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PART III: LANGUAGE

Part III presents three competencies related to language. The first competency addresses the needs of native English speakers (NESs), who speak many varieties of English; the second and third competencies address the needs of English language learners (ELLs).

PREVIEW OF COMPETENCIES ADDRESSED IN PART III

GENERAL COMPETENCY I:
Building on and Expanding Language Proficiency and Literacy Skills of Native English Speakers

1. The teacher responds strategically to differences in students' ways of using language.
2. The teacher understands and addresses dialect as a legitimate language that can enhance the students' potential for learning and literacy.
3. The teacher expects high levels of literacy and supports students' language and literacy development at all grade and age levels.

GENERAL COMPETENCY II:
Addressing Oral Language Needs of English Language Learners

1. The teacher values and fosters first-language use and development.
2. The teacher supports ELL students' ongoing English language acquisition.
3. The teacher mediates students' development of academic language.

GENERAL COMPETENCY III:
Building the Literacy Skills of English Language Learners

1. The teacher learns about families' orientations to literacy and their literacy histories.
2. The teacher activates and builds on students' background knowledge and interests.
3. The teacher supports transfer of skills from students' home languages.
4. The teacher supports students' vocabulary development.
5. The teacher explicitly teaches word analysis.
6. The teacher supports development of metacognitive skills.
7. The teacher scaffolds students' understanding of text structure.
8. The teacher expects and teaches all learners to read and write at high levels.

INTRODUCTION

Proficiency in oral and written language is a key to academic success. Two major goals of schooling are to help students become literate and develop academic language proficiency. In a multicultural, multilingual society, the challenge of accomplishing these goals is compounded. For these reasons, teachers need a solid base of knowledge and skills related to language learning and success in school. In effect, they need to be "educational linguists" (Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000).

language: *the primary system of human communication; a symbol system that can represent thoughts; the principal means of transmitting culture cross-generationally; the most important symbol system used in teaching and learning*

Teaching and learning are fundamentally dependent upon language. Language is the most flexible and powerful symbol system available to human beings for representing and communicating thoughts (Pinker, 1994; Vygotsky, 1962). Although other symbol systems, such as mathematics, are important cognitive tools, students' success in U.S. schools depends primarily on their ability to master oral and written English for a wide range of purposes. Students who are learning new languages or dialects are at a disadvantage when the curriculum is taught entirely in what is called "standard English": They are usually expected to acquire the standard code and learn their academics through that code simultaneously.

academic language proficiency: *the ability to comprehend and use the language of school and texts, e.g., to obtain and communicate new information, grasp and offer explanations, interpret oral and written discourse, and use evidence to support one's point of view (contrasted with interpersonal or conversational language proficiency)*

In many classrooms, teachers have students from a multitude of linguistic backgrounds. Some students are building proficiency in English as a second or third language. In some parts of the country, a substantial portion of these students are children of migrant workers, whose yearly transitions must be taken into account by school districts in order to ensure students' academic progress and English language development. Some students may be mastering a new dialect

of English, while still others are learning the social conventions of language use in the classroom. Thus, addressing language difference is a central concern for teachers, and many have not had the preservice education or professional development that they need.

Another aspect of the challenge for teachers is that not all English language learners (ELLs) enter U.S. schools in primary school. A significant number of immigrant students from the ages of 10 to 22 are in newcomer programs, which provide English language development to students who speak little or no English. In 2000, the Center for Applied Linguistics issued a report on 115 programs operating in 30 states, serving students whose home languages were Spanish, Russian, Mandarin, Philipino, Haitian Creole, Punjabi, Polish, Vietnamese, Hindi, and many others. Students typically spend about two years in such programs, and their daily instruction ranges from less than half a day to a full day, with the preponderance of programs surveyed (56%) offering a full day of instruction. As these students, some of whom have had very little education prior to the newcomer program, are mainstreamed into general education classes, their teachers must help them attain the academic proficiency that they need to graduate from high school.

dialect: *a regional or social variety of a language that differs from other varieties in its vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar, and discourse style*

The United States is home to speakers of hundreds of languages and many dialects of English. Language differences are often associated with social, cultural, racial, religious, and ethnic differences as well as national origin. In the United States, the range of language variation includes

- class-related differences in language use (the “rules” of communication),
- distinctly different dialects of English,
- languages of peoples indigenous to North America, and
- languages of those who have immigrated over the past centuries from non-English-speaking countries.

A particular dialect of English is considered standard English or "the socially dominant language," yet for millions of people living in the United States, it is not the language or dialect of home and family. To make matters more complicated, languages and dialects continually change. Teachers are faced with the task of supporting students to become proficient with the socially preferred dialect of English, including the academic language associated with school.

Guiding Assumptions About Language

Language Differences and Cultural Differences Go Together

As Heath states, "Language learning is cultural learning and thus variable across sociocultural groups" (1986, p. 144). From their families and communities, children learn not only the vocabulary and grammar of their home language but also its uses for different settings and purposes (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). Cultures have different approaches to teaching, learning, and knowledge (Au, 1980; Greenfield, 1994; Tharp, Estrada, Dalton, & Yamauchi, 2000). For this reason, cultural understanding can enhance teachers' ability to respond constructively to students' language differences.

All Dialects Are of Equal Linguistic Value

From the perspective of linguists, no dialect or language is superior to another (Crystal, 1997). In other words, there is no single correct way to speak English (Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). As with languages, each dialect serves all the communicative needs of its community of speakers. However, it is clear that the most socially valued dialect enjoys a privileged status and, as the "power code" (Delpit, 1995), is often perceived to be superior by nonlinguists. In the United States, the socially preferred dialect is referred to as standard English. Educators need to be careful not to confuse a dialect's social status with its adequacy as a linguistic code. Nonstandard dialects are not slang, nor should they be thought of as indicating simply a failure to learn the standard dialect (Wolfram et al., 1999). However, most educators and parents believe that students should master standard English (Delpit, 1995; LeMoine, 2001; Rickford, 1999).

People Are Capable of Mastering Multiple Languages and Dialects

Many children in countries around the world learn two or more languages as a natural part of growing up. Sometimes a third or fourth language is added through schooling (Bialystok, 2001). As children or adults, many people have also mastered two or more dialects of the language or languages they speak (Baker, 2002; Wolfram et al., 1999). Even young children learn to select the appropriate code for each social situation—speaking English with a parent, Chinese with a grandparent, and both within a single conversation with bilingual friends ("code-switching") (Bialystok, 2001). Likewise with dialects, a young adult may use standard academic English in the classroom and quickly switch to African American Vernacular English (AAVE) with her friends (Delpit, 2002). It is not necessary to give up one language or dialect in order to acquire another.

All Students Need to Learn Standard English

It is in students' best interest to learn standard English (Delpit, 1995; LeMoine, 2001; Rickford, 1999). Although a nonstandard dialect is both a badge of identity (Salzmann, 1993) and a socially important means of communication within one's own community, mastery of the standard dialect is necessary for school and job success (Rickford, 1999; Tharp et al., 2000).

Students' Home Languages and Dialects Should Be Respected

Because language and dialect are a vital part of student identity (Trueba, 1993), teachers' positive regard for home languages and dialects is especially important (Valenzuela, 1999; Zentella, 1997). School practices that interfere with maintenance of a student's home language or dialect, either directly or indirectly, can contribute to social and developmental problems and impede the learning of standard English (Valdés, 1996; Valenzuela, 1999; Wong-Fillmore, 1991; Zentella, 1997).

Celebrating the Wonders of Language

Ironically, the more determined we are to rid the school of children's home languages, the more determined they must become to preserve it. Since language is one of the most intimate expressions of identity, indeed "the skin that we speak," then to reject a person's language can only feel as if we are rejecting him....Despite any good intentions, if we cannot understand and even celebrate the wonders of the language these children bring with them to the school—the language forged on African soil, tempered by two hundred years of love, laughter, and survival in the harshest of conditions—then we have little hope of convincing them that we hold their best interests at heart. (Delpit, 2002, pp. 47–48)

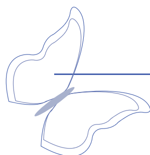
All Teachers Need to Support Students' Language Development

Students who are learning a new dialect, a new language, or simply new ways to use language need explicit language development support from their teachers (Delpit, 1995; Rickford, 1999; Wolfram, et al., 1999; Wong-Fillmore & Snow, 2000). ELLs benefit when both specialized bilingual and ESL staff and general education teachers use strategies that promote language development and make a challenging curriculum accessible (Cummins, 2001a; García & Beltrán, 2003). In other words, simply being exposed to standard English and taught in standard English will not promote adequate development of academic English for ELLs or dialect speakers (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Rickford, 1999). Explicit instruction helps children who have not naturally acquired the dominant culture's academic language (Adger, Christian, & Taylor, 1999; Harris-Wright, 1999). LeMoine (2001) and others have

***nondominant group:** those who have been defined as a minority group on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion; who historically have been underserved by schools; and who face limitations to access and power in society. For example, in U.S. schools the nondominant group is often characterized as students and teachers of color.*

recommended that teachers use second language teaching methods, such as providing comprehensible input and opportunities for students to converse with fluent speakers of standard English.

dominant group: *those who have been defined as a majority group on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or religion and who historically have had greater advantages, access, and power in society. For example, in U.S. schools the dominant group is often characterized as white, middle-class students and teachers.*



GENERAL COMPETENCY I:

BUILDING ON AND EXPANDING LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY AND LITERACY SKILLS OF NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

Everyone belongs to a "speech community"—a group of people who share basic expectations of how language should be used. As members of such communities, one knows the unwritten rules of communicating. For example, in some speech communities, children are allowed and encouraged to initiate conversations with adults. In others, that behavior would be considered rude or impertinent (Rogoff, 2003; Wolfram, Adger, & Christian, 1999). Academic language proficiency is important not only for speakers of languages other than English but also for speakers of English who have been socialized to use language in different ways from what is expected in school (Heath, 1983, 1986; Philips, 1983).

1. The teacher responds strategically to differences in students' ways of using language.

Some students may come from homes where problem solving and new skills are typically taught through the use of language. Other students, such as those from traditional Pacific Island, American Indian, and Alaska Native communities, may be accustomed to being taught such skills through demonstration and modeling (Lipka, Mohatt, & Ciulistet, 1998; Swisher & Deyhle, 1992). For many students, there is a great difference between language uses expected in school and those developed within home and community (Heath, 1986).

Children are able to learn new ways of using language, yet some practices may be more difficult to adopt than others. For example, Navajo students are likely to participate better in small groups that are not mixed by gender (Tharp et al., 2000). Immigrant Mexican or Korean students may be very uncomfortable about being called upon to answer questions or read their writing to the whole class (Greenfield, personal communication).

In order to engage all students, a teacher needs to use a range of participant structures (Philips, 1983)—that is, patterns of language use and interaction among students or between students and teacher. As Sheets (2005) notes, "Since classroom interactions involve some form of communication, language is fundamental to all interactions—social and academic" (p. 91). One type of participant structure is a whole-class discussion in which the teacher poses questions, students take turns answering, and the teacher evaluates their answers. This contrasts with group or choral response to questions, which is a common participant structure in many cultures (Au, 1980; Erickson & Mohatt, 1982; Philips, 1983).

participant structure: *the organizational format for interaction in the classroom, including expectations for who may speak at which points in an interaction*

For students from certain cultures, any individual participation (and competition between students) will be far less comfortable than group participation and cooperation (Mehan et al., 1995; Rothstein-Fisch, Trumbull, Isaac, Daley, & Pérez, 2003). Students from some cultural backgrounds with school experience in another country may not be accustomed to asking the teacher questions other than procedural ones (Oka, 2003). Some students may be mystified by the instructional strategy, used to test comprehension, of posing questions to which the teacher knows the answer (Heath, 1986). Teachers can observe and note students' responses to different participant structures, allowing students to demonstrate what they know through oral language, and then teachers can vary their approach accordingly. As shown in the following example, teachers can also be aware of how culture influences their communication patterns.

Cultural Variation in Dispensing Praise

Verbal praising of students is widely variable cross-culturally. Yup'ik Eskimo teacher, Mrs. Nancy Sharp, has reported some of the differences between her approach to praise and that of her *kass'aq* (White) colleagues to her co-researchers in the Ciulistet project (Lipka et al., 1998).

"Sharp described her reward structures as less verbally effusive than those of her *kass'aq* colleagues. She did not say she refuses to praise, but she rejected the 'bubbly' praise she heard used by outside teachers. She preferred to praise privately and only once, rather than in multiple verbal iterations. In our analysis of tape contrasting Native and nonNative teachers, we have seen repeated examples of this. One will find a Western teacher using evaluative praising (e.g., *good*, *great*, etc.) more frequently in a 10-minute period than a Yup'ik teacher in an entire class period.... Sharp believed that the student should receive rewards such as free time at the beginning of the class, opportunities to work alone on projects if one gets one's work done, and encouragement through subtle nonverbal responses, such as raising of the eyebrows (meaning *yes* in Yup'ik), a single verbal praise, or repeating the correct answer."

(Lipka et al., 1998, p. 64)

When teachers are aware of cultural variation in participation and communication patterns, they are better able to ascertain whether a student is exhibiting a different, learned pattern of behavior. A teacher can learn about the communication norms of students' communities from literature, colleagues, parents, and community members.

Known-Answer Questions

Some students are not used to being asked known-answer questions. A known-answer question is one to which the teacher knows the answer, and it is a strategy that teachers use to test student comprehension. Some children have not had experience with such questions in their home communities. They may reason that if the answer were known to the teacher—or obvious—she would not be asking the question. For this reason, they may not respond when they actually know the answer. (Heath, 1983)

Through careful observation, a teacher can determine which students participate when different strategies are used. Some students may not talk much in groups but will respond when called on by the teacher (Heath, 1986). A teacher needs to consider students' communication styles in regulating the pacing of instruction and classroom participation. Some students require more "wait time" to respond to a question. Others will not volunteer to answer but will respond if called on by the teacher. Many have been taught to be modest and not to show off—or, potentially, show up their peers.

Students can benefit from explicit statements and explanations about language and its use in the classroom, particularly when there are marked differences between home language and school language (Delpit, 1995; Kucer & Silva, 1999). Teachers can help students to expand their language use repertoires by structuring small groups in which the teacher plays a modeling role (García & Beltrán, 2003; Dutro & Moran, 2003).

2. The teacher understands and addresses dialect as a legitimate language that can enhance the students' potential for learning and literacy.

Teachers also need the skills to work with students who speak nonstandard dialects whose grammar and vocabulary differ from standard English. It is important for teachers to respect a student's dialect and recognize that dialect differences are not deficits (Baugh, 1994; Labov, 1972). Such differences are the product of a different, and not inferior, language system. A nonstandard dialect should not be confused with slang or student errors. Each dialect has its own conventions, and students naturally speak the dialects to which they have been exposed at home.

If students cannot speak the dialect of school proficiently, they can learn it with the help of their teachers and through reading. Learning a new dialect does not mean supplanting the old one. In reality, people master multiple ways of speaking that are appropriate for home or informal gatherings of friends, the workplace or classroom, and other settings. Various contexts require certain pronunciation,

vocabulary, grammar, pacing, rhetorical strategies, and many other elements. At times, people choose to speak the dialect of those in power, and other times they speak the dialect of a peer group in order to express closeness (Salzmann, 1993). Often dialects other than standard English are relegated to a lower status due more to social evaluation and language prejudice than to linguistic adequacy (Adger, 2005). However, most educators believe that students need to learn the dialect of standard English in order to master the power code of society (Delpit, 1995).

Teachers need to understand the contrasts between standard English and students' home dialects in order to design instruction that supports mastery of the language of school—both its forms and uses—without denigrating students' own language (Meier, 1999; Wolfram et al., 1999). For example, speakers of African American Vernacular English (AAVE) may routinely omit the copula (the verb *to be*) in conversation: "She excited" versus "She is excited." (Speakers of some Asian languages may do the same when speaking English because their language does not express the copula either.) Consonant clusters may be reduced at the ends of words, so that *cost* is pronounced "cos" or *cold* as "col." Students may tacitly recognize these differences but may need help to make them conscious for purposes of pronunciation and spelling (Rickford, 1999). Wolfram et al. (1999) suggest how to engage students in dialect study so that they become more aware of the systematic differences between their own dialect and that of school.

Guidelines for Teaching Standard English

Instruction in standard English should be coupled with information about the nature of dialect diversity. By giving students information about various dialects, including their own, teachers can demonstrate the integrity of all dialects. This approach clarifies the relationship between standard and vernacular dialects, underscoring the social values associated with each and the practical reasons for learning the standard dialect.

Teachers and materials developers need a clear understanding of the systematic differences between standard and vernacular dialects in order to help students learn standard English.

The dialect of spoken standard English that is taught should reflect the language norms of the community. The goal of instruction should be to learn the standard variety of the local community, not some formal dialect of English that is not actually used in the area. Regional standards are particularly relevant in the case of pronunciation features.

Language instruction should include norms of language use along with standard English structures. Speaking a standard dialect includes the use of particular conversational styles as well as particular language forms. For example, using standard English in a business telephone conversation does not involve simply using standard grammar and pronunciation. It also involves other conventions, such as asking the caller to "hold" if an interruption is called for, or performing certain closing routines before hanging up.

(Christian, 1997, p. 3)

Teachers can make curricular and instructional connections to students' dialects in several ways. For instance, researcher/teacher Carol Lee used African American literature with African American high school students in the Chicago area to show them both the value and beauty of the rhetorical styles and help them to recognize their own knowledge about language. She used books such as *My Man Bovanne* by Toni Cade Bambara and *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston, which include use of AAVE and particular rhetorical strategies associated with African American oral traditions. At first, students balked at the African American style and language

because they had implicitly learned that it was not valued by the larger society. However, once they began to accept it and to draw upon their linguistic knowledge base, their literacy skills developed at twice the rate of students in a control group (Lee, 1995, 2000).

Valuing Students' Home Dialect

Giving validity and equal status to students' home dialect makes it easier for them to acquire the school dialect in addition to the home dialect. Teachers can help students in this process by creating opportunities that allow students to use both. (Adger, 1997)

3. The teacher expects high levels of literacy and supports students' language and literacy development at all grade and age levels.

Teachers who maintain high language and literacy expectations for all of their students yield more positive student outcomes. Regardless of students' prior experiences with school, language, and literacy, students can achieve significant gains in academic outcomes when effective instructional strategies are properly implemented.

Lee (1991, 1993) advocates the use of "culturally sensitive scaffolding" as a strategy for enhancing the literacy education of ethnic minority students. In her work with African American novice readers in secondary school, Lee draws on students' knowledge of traditional communicative practices such as "signifying"—a form of discourse involving the use of metaphorical, ironical, and humorous word play—to help them interpret African American literature, particularly "speakerly" texts like Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Lee helps students develop their awareness of an author's (and their own) use of language; the historical, political, and social implications of language forms; and the literary symbolism and psychology of characters that language reveals. Rather than devaluing "Black English," Lee's approach highlights the language and helps low-achieving readers to accomplish high-level tasks of literary interpretation and criticism.

LeMoine (2001) suggests using second language acquisition methods (discussed under Competency III). She recommends six principles for teaching African American standard English language learners (SELLs):

Effective teachers of African American SELLs

1. Build their knowledge and understanding of nonstandard language and the students who use them.
2. Integrate linguistic knowledge about nonstandard languages (African American language) into instruction.
3. Use second language acquisition methods to support student learning of school language and literacy.
4. Employ a balanced instructional approach to literacy that incorporates language experience, whole language/access to books, and phonics.
5. Infuse the history and culture of SELLs into the curriculum.
6. Consider the learning styles and strengths of SELLs in designing instruction.

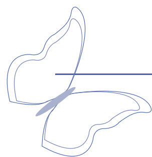
(LeMoine, 2001, pp. 176–177)

Delpit (1995) emphasizes that teachers must ensure that the history and culture of SELLs is a significant part of the curriculum. She also notes the need for teachers to help students of all ages make linguistic comparisons between their dialect and standard English (e.g., having younger children discuss the ways television characters from different cultural groups speak; having students interview people and listen to the radio for differences and similarities in the way people speak). Culturally competent teachers seek to both promote students' pride in their dialect and build standard English and academic language proficiency; they provide students with multiple texts to show that many successful writers are fluent in various types of English.

In Short…

The culturally competent teacher

- ❒ Learns about the patterns of language use in students' communities
- ❒ Uses a variety of structures for students to participate in classroom interactions
- ❒ Observes students' responses and performance and alters the pace of instruction and communication as needed
- ❒ Makes language expectations of the classroom clear
- ❒ Models new ways to use language
- ❒ Respects students' home dialects and does not equate difference to deficit
- ❒ Recognizes that mastering a new dialect does not mean giving up the old one
- ❒ Learns about key features of students' dialects
- ❒ Engages in activities that highlight differences between the dialect of school and that of home
- ❒ Supports students' conscious choices about when to use which dialect
- ❒ Makes curricular and instructional connections to students' dialects



GENERAL COMPETENCY II:

ADDRESSING ORAL LANGUAGE NEEDS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

The term *English language learner* (ELL) refers to students who have a home language other than English and who are receiving specialized language services. They may be part of a bilingual or English as a second language (ESL) program, or they may be placed in the general education program and receive language support through "pull-out" instruction or in-class support from a specialist. We use the term more broadly, to include students who have been designated fully English proficient but who have the influence of another language at home. These students are still learning English and cannot be equated to native English speakers (NESs). Research suggests that these ELLs need close monitoring to ensure that any educational problems are not attributable to the need for more language support (August & Hakuta, 1997). Assessment practices that are designed for NESs are not always equitable and useful in relation to ELLs (Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003).

The common perception is that children learn new languages readily, and many do acquire conversational proficiency within one to three years. However, development of academic language—the language of school and texts—takes four to seven or more years (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). "Even the most privileged second language learners take a significant amount of time to attain mastery, especially for the level of language required for school success" (Hakuta et al., 2000, p. 6). Most ELLs are in general education programs after a few years of language support, yet they are still developing their academic language proficiency.

Through reviewing student records, teachers can learn about past language services that students have received, academic and language assessment data, and any concerns reported by families. Such information should be available on any ELL student because federal law requires that districts conduct a "home language survey" and testing in the native language as well as English. These records, in combina-

tion with family interviews, can provide invaluable information for instructional planning as well as for interpreting student behavior and academic performance (Delgado-Gaitan, 1994; Goldenberg, Gallimore, Reese, & Garnier, 2001; Heubert & Hauser, 1999; Monzó & Rueda, 2001; Valdés, 1996).

1. The teacher values and fosters first-language use and development.

It is more accurate to view ELLs as "multicompetent language users, rather than deficient native speakers" (Oka, 2003, p. 7). Although the emphasis is often placed on learning English, students' home languages are indeed a valuable cognitive and social resource, and experts recommend making efforts to support the continued development of first languages (Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2002; Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, Pasta, & Billings, 1991; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Teachers and other school personnel can play a key role in helping students maintain their home languages, especially through the messages that they communicate about those languages (Brisk, 1998). Valuing students' home languages and cultures is associated with improved school climate and academic outcomes (Au, 1980; Brisk & Harrington, 2000; Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000).

Several program models address the needs of ELLs. At one end of the spectrum are bilingual programs that continue well into the middle school years, enabling students to develop academic language and literacy in both languages. At the other end are structured immersion programs, where students are taught only in English. (See Resources at the end of Part III for publications that present overviews of these options.)

Research supports the notion that bilingual education can accomplish the twin goals of linguistic development and academic achievement, primarily because students have opportunities to learn through their home language while learning English (Bruck & Genesee, 1995; Espinoza-Herold, 2003). The most successful bilingual programs are dual-immersion (also called two-way bilingual) programs, where

native speakers of two languages participate in academic learning through both languages for several years (Lindholm-Leary, 2001; Lindholm-Leary & Borsato, 2002; Thomas & Collier, 2002). Thus, for example, native Chinese speakers and native English speakers serve as models of each others' languages, become bilingual, and participate in a full academic curriculum.

Research shows that high-quality bilingual educational programs enable students not only to become proficient in both English and their home language but also to perform better academically than those who have been immersed in English (Greene, 1998; Ramírez et al., 1991; Slavin & Cheung, 2003; Snow, 1990; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

By emphasizing the development of two languages, bilingual programs take an "additive" approach, in contrast to an English-only, "subtractive" approach (Valenzuela, 1999). Unfortunately, many districts are unable to provide bilingual programs, particularly when districts have small numbers of ELLs from one or more language groups at each grade level. Nevertheless, school staff and teachers can take an additive approach outside the context of bilingual programs by encouraging families to sustain students' home languages and communicating positive regard for those languages.

Whether they have access to bilingual education or are taught English through ESL methods, most ELLs are transitioned to English-only classrooms at some point. Many general education teachers face the dual challenge of supporting these mainstreamed ELLs as they both develop oral and written English and progress academically. For ELLs who are placed in general education classrooms, teachers need to know how to promote language development of both English and first languages.

The reasons for supporting first language development are both cognitive and social. Research shows that there are intellectual advantages to bilingualism. Bilinguals have greater awareness of language and ability to consciously use language knowledge (Bialystok, 1988, 1991, 1997; Bruck & Genesee, 1995). When children continue to develop

and use their home language, they maintain important cross-generational links and their parents are better able to socialize and discipline them (Wong-Fillmore, 1991).

ELLs perform better on a classroom task when they are encouraged to use their first language (Ballenger, 2001; Curran, 2003; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003; Escamilla, Mahon, Riley-Bernal, & Rutledge, 2003). Using their first language, they can mentally translate a set of directions that are written in English in order to understand a task or problem better and they can also make better plans about how to approach activities. They can also engage effectively in a cooperative activity with others who speak their home language.

Culturally competent teachers convey their beliefs about the value of developing first languages to both students and families. However, some families may worry that continued development of their children's home language will come at the expense of English acquisition. Teachers can convey to families that research shows this is not the case: Children are capable of learning two or more languages at once, and generic language skills learned in one language transfer to new languages (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Fitzgerald, 1995; Tabors, 1997). In addition, when parents are not highly proficient in English, they cannot provide good models of English for their children. In such cases, teachers can encourage parents to continue speaking their first language with their children.

Not Bilingual, but Multilingual

Many students are actually multilingual rather than bilingual. For example, numerous Mexican immigrant students come from indigenous cultures that have a home language other than Spanish, such as Tzotzil or Zapotecan. Spanish is their second language, and English their third. (Fox, 2004)

Until recently, in Haiti French was the language spoken in school, and Haitian Creole (Kreyòl) the language of home and community. Haitian immigrant children who have begun their education in Haiti may thus be learning a third language when they enter U.S. schools. (Lefebre, 1998)

2. The teacher supports ELL students' ongoing English language acquisition.

Knowledge of a student's linguistic and educational history is important for planning how to address his or her linguistic and educational needs. By reviewing school records and conducting family interviews, teachers can find information about students' language histories that addresses a variety of questions. What languages are spoken at home? Has the student been educated entirely in the United States, or did the student go to school for some period of time in another country? If the latter, what was schooling like in that country? Was the schooling continuous or interrupted (as for many refugee students)? What programs and services has the student accessed before entering the regular classroom? What other professionals can shed light on the student's current language and educational status and needs? What supports can the family provide, and what assistance does the family need?

In the best case, teachers will also have access to speech and language professionals with whom they can confer about a student's progress and possible need for additional language services or modifications to their in-class program. ELLs may produce errors in English throughout the period of language acquisition. Error patterns are somewhat predictable depending on their first language, age, and level of English acquisition; teachers and specialists can use these patterns to determine the needed assistance. A small percentage of any group may have an actual language delay or disorder. To ensure appropriate identification and placement of ELLs, all teachers need a basic grasp of the distinction between difficulties in second language development versus difficulties associated with learning disabilities. In questionable cases, formal evaluation by a trained language specialist can help eliminate confusion between difference and deficit.

Both specialized bilingual/ESL staff and general education teachers need skills in teaching and assessing second language learners and second dialect learners. Ongoing assessment integrated with instruction is key to determining a student's language needs. Students benefit from both formal (explicit instruction) and informal (natural

conversation) opportunities to develop English (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Echevarria & Goldenberg, 1999). General education teachers can use many strategies such as developing language through content-area instruction (Short, Crandall, & Christian, 1989) and providing explicit opportunities for building vocabulary and analyzing language structures (Coady & Huckin, 1997; Dutro & Moran, 2003). Some educators caution against teaching language through content-area instruction without complementing that approach with explicit language work (Dutro & Moran, 2003). One cannot assume that an ELL student is automatically acquiring adequate language through a rich curriculum.

Another effective strategy is Sheltered English, which makes the English language more comprehensible to students who are still learning English. One form of this strategy, Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE), provides access to the core curriculum along with English language development (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). A teacher may simplify syntax without simplifying content and support language development with visuals such as photographs, diagrams, drawings, graphic organizers, and actual objects (called "*realia*" in the literature) (Dutro & Moran, 2003). Teachers in sheltered English or SDAIE classrooms occasionally tap into students' native languages to convey meaning and promote language acquisition using visual aids, modified speech, and other techniques (Berman et al., 1992).

Developing an adequate vocabulary is especially important for ELLs. Students learn the majority of their vocabulary from conversations (largely with adults); listening to adults read to them (DeTemple & Snow, 2003); and reading on their own (Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement [CIERA], 2001). ELLs often do not get the same type of English input as their NES peers. Research suggests that ELLs benefit from intensive vocabulary development, such as analytic instruction, which focuses on context, explanations, examples, and repeated opportunities to see and use a word in various contexts (Coady & Huckin, 1997; Juel & Deffes, 2004). Researchers also recommend explicitly teaching (1) vocabulary words before

students read a text, (2) strategies for using dictionaries for vocabulary development, and (3) ways to use prefixes and suffixes to decipher word meanings (CIERA, 2001). ELLs who may be quite proficient with basic syntax can still benefit greatly from activities that expand their familiarity and comfort with more complex forms (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). One way to judge ELLs' need for support is by making comparisons to their same-age NES peers.

An important factor in students' language development is the amount of time spent talking in class (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Tharp et al., 2000). Too often the teacher does most of the talking, but there are formats for participation that maximize the amount of time for student talk. One such technique is instructional conversation (IC), in which the teacher facilitates participation but does not regulate every interchange (Goldenberg, 1991). Teachers can create opportunities for ELLs to interact in the classroom with NESs, who can serve as models (Lindholm-Leary, 2001). The teacher can also consciously model particular forms and uses of English.

3. The teacher mediates students' development of academic language.

Students need to be proficient not only with interpersonal communication skills but also with what has been called "academic language." Academic language—the oral and written language used in schools and textbooks —entails specialized vocabulary, syntax, and organizational structures that differ depending upon subject matter (Bailey, Butler, LaFramenta, & Ong, 2004; Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Solomon & Rhodes, 1995). Typical purposes of academic language are to analyze, summarize, evaluate, and interpret in both oral and written modes (Dutro & Moran, 2003). In contrast to conversational language, academic language takes at least several years to develop (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). In fact, "[f]or both native English speakers and second-language learners, learning academic uses of language is a lifelong endeavor" (Dutro & Moran, 2003, p. 231).

Proficiency with academic language involves knowing academic vocabulary and syntax as well as appropriate ways of participating

in discussion, argumentation, and description. For instance, to present an argument in favor of abolishing slavery, a student needs to understand terms such as *abolish*, *slavery*, *states rights*, *constitutional*, and *rebel*. He or she also needs to know how to support a statement with evidence and opinion—and how to distinguish the two. Many theorists and practitioners espouse the approach of teaching language through content (Anstrom, 1997; Crandall, 1998; Ovando & Collier, 1998; Short, Crandall, & Christian, 1989; CREDE, 2003). As Crandall (1998) points out, in the real world, people learn content and language simultaneously. ELLs benefit from explicit teaching of key vocabulary and skills for deciphering the meanings of words (Dutro & Moran, 2003). Culturally competent teachers also ensure that students master the vocabulary, syntax, and ways of talking about concepts associated with science, mathematics, social studies, and other subject areas.

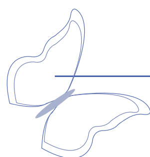
It is important for teachers to scaffold student learning. Scaffolding refers to assistance provided to students to allow them to comprehend or engage in an activity at a higher level than they might without the assistance (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976). It is a concept that grows out of a Vygotskian view of teaching and learning, with the teacher as a mediator between the known and unknown (Vygotsky, 1978). The metaphor of scaffolding, with its implications of structures of support, signifies that the teacher is constructing or serving as the framework to support student learning.

Scaffolding can take the form of building a context for a new idea or skill—preparing the student for what is to come. To scaffold language, a teacher may expand or elaborate on something a student has said. He or she may provide a sentence framework for trying out new vocabulary and have students fill in the blanks orally. Sometimes teachers verbally model a communicative interaction and have students do it together as a group. Using anticipatory questions to activate students' prior knowledge of a topic is another method of scaffolding their reading or writing. A teacher can scaffold a student's acquisition of new language forms and uses by providing verbal models, structuring verbal interactions, and using graphic organizers (Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Walqui, 2000).

In Short…

The culturally competent teacher

- ❒ Understands the cognitive and social value of continued first-language development and communicates that value to students and parents
- ❒ Encourages development of both languages and use of the first language in the home
- ❒ Uses school records, family interviews, and consultation with professionals to determine a student's needs and review progress
- ❒ Uses tested techniques such as sheltered English and content-area instruction to build language proficiency
- ❒ Engages in intensive vocabulary development and other explicit language instruction
- ❒ Maximizes time for student talk and opportunities for interactions with native English speakers
- ❒ Understands the difference between conversational and academic proficiency with language
- ❒ Models and scaffolds language forms and uses associated with different subject areas and genres



GENERAL COMPETENCY III:

BUILDING THE LITERACY SKILLS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Although this competency focuses on ELLs, many of the specific subcompetencies and strategies also apply to students whose cultures and dialects differ from those of the school (Bloome, Champion, Katz, Morton, & Muldrow, 2000; LeMoine, 2001).

What counts as literacy varies greatly from community to community. In fact, literacy could be defined as the ability to use language in all of its forms for the range of purposes valued by one's community. In some communities reading and writing may serve primarily religious purposes; in others, they may serve the needs of commerce and personal livelihood as well as of ongoing education (Reder, 1994). Still other communities may choose to remain nonliterate in order to maintain a longstanding oral tradition for teaching and learning (Kwachka, 1994; Reder & Green, 1983). It is easy to see why students from different backgrounds may enter school with different orientations to reading and writing.

Despite this great variation in orientation to literacy, all students must master a core set of literacy skills in order to complete high school and move on to further education and employment. It is important to work closely with families to understand their approaches to literacy and the literacy environment of the home. In this way, families will understand how literacy instruction is provided in the classroom, and the teacher can find out how families are able to support their children's literacy development.

As students move through the grades, literacy calls upon specific skills associated with the written code as well as academic language. ELL students do not have to be fluent in English to begin reading in English (Anderson & Roit, 1996; Slavin & Cheung, 2003). Reading can be a "gateway to language development" (Anderson & Roit, 1996, p. 297). However, limitations in vocabulary in English can contribute to comprehension problems; teachers need to monitor students and provide the necessary support (Tabors & Snow, 2001).

1. The teacher learns about families' orientation to literacy and their literacy histories.

A key to understanding students' orientation to literacy is knowing how literacy is approached in their families. This topic is treated in depth in Part II, Competency IV.

2. The teacher activates and builds on students' background knowledge and interests.

Culturally competent teachers build on existing background knowledge and help students develop new background knowledge related to what they are reading (Coady & Huckin, 1997; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998). Background knowledge plays a large part in reading comprehension (Anderson & Pearson, 1984; Beck & McKeown, 1986; Nathensen-Mejía & Escamilla, 2003). Linking to students' culture-based knowledge and interests improves engagement (see example) (Lee, 1995, 2000). When texts are not carefully chosen (or are not available) to reflect students' cultural experiences, reading comprehension can suffer (Bartolomé, 1994).

Choosing a Story

Mr. Giancarlo Mercado teaches fourth grade in Venice, California. Most of his students are Latino immigrants, and one of their favorite stories is "*Las Mañanitas*," the tale of a small boy whose family members are migrant workers. The boy always knows when they are about to move because the cardboard boxes show up at their house.

Mr. Mercado says that his students—many of whom have had to move multiple times because of economic pressures—were riveted by this story. They were eager to read it and were passionately engaged afterward in discussing the young boy's dilemma over whether to stay with friends in order to finish the school year in the same school or travel with his family. (All 28 students thought he should go with his family.) Mr. Mercado's experience shows how engaged students can be when literature topics coincide with their interests, values, and prior experience.

(Based on an account in Trumbull, Diaz-Meza, & Hasan, in press.)

To activate background knowledge, teachers can organize a whole- or small-group discussion among students about experiences related to the upcoming text. If students lack knowledge of a topic, the teacher can preteach specific information that students will need to understand the text (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003). The more knowledge a teacher has about students' own backgrounds, the easier it will be to distinguish between what can be activated and what needs to be built (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003, p. 104).

3. The teacher supports transfer of skills from students' home languages.

When ELLs read in English, they draw on relevant skills and knowledge in both languages. ELLs can use their knowledge about how alphabets work (if their first language is alphabetic); vocabulary (teaching cognates, or words that are similar in the two languages); and metacognitive strategies in reading (when they have developed them well in the first language) (D'Angiulli, Siegel, & Serra, 2001; Fitzgerald, 1995; García, 2000). García (2000) reviewed research on transfer from the first language to a new language and concluded that it occurs but that many students can benefit from explicit instruction in specific strategies.

Instruction in cognates can help ELL readers recognize words in English. Good bilingual readers use knowledge of cognates as they read in English (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996), but many students need explicit instruction to recognize these relationships and

Common Underlying Proficiency

[A]lthough the surface aspects (e.g., pronunciation, fluency) of different languages are clearly separate, there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency which is common across languages. This common underlying proficiency makes possible the transfer of cognitive/academic or literacy-related skills across languages. (Cummins, 1981, p. 19)

use them to learn new words and comprehend text (García & Nagy, 1993). Teachers can also make students aware of how they can be tripped up by false cognates (e.g., *éxito* in Spanish means "success," not "exit"). (See Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003 for a discussion of English/Spanish cognates.)

4. The teacher supports students' vocabulary development.

Although vocabulary and background knowledge are related, the relationship may be more complicated for ELLs. For instance, ELLs may have words for particular concepts in their home language but not in English, or they may have imprecise or even incorrect terms for these concepts in English (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003; Solano-Flores & Trumbull, 2003). Preteaching key vocabulary is an important part of preparing ELL students to read and comprehend English texts (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003). Determining which concepts students know but do not have an English word for is a challenging task for the teacher.

Research has shown that both ELLs and English-only speakers can benefit from intensive vocabulary development (Carlo et al., 2004; Juel & Deffes, 2004). Such instruction improves students' vocabulary, their strategies for approaching new words, and their reading comprehension (Carlo et al., 2004).

Successful vocabulary development programs have focused on teaching academic words, awareness of the multiple meanings of words, strategies for inferring word meaning from context, and tools for analyzing morphological and cross-linguistic aspects of word meanings (Coady & Huckin, 1997). It is particularly effective to teach students to use the dictionary in activities that help them see relationships among words as opposed to simply looking up definitions (Marzano, 2003). Semantic mapping is one strategy that can tap and build background knowledge on any topic (Johnson & Pearson, 1984; Pearson, 2003). By dealing with words in relation to each other, this strategy gets to deeper levels of meaning.

Explicit vocabulary building is critical for ELLs as well as for students from lower socio-economic groups (Hart & Risley, 1995). Because vocabulary knowledge is essential to reading comprehension, it is important to help these students add words to their lexicon in the early years of schooling (Biemiller, 2001; Blachowitz & Fisher, 2004; Nagy & Scott, 2000). Teaching cognates is one source of vocabulary building for ELLs whose languages have common roots with English (Romance languages such as Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, French, and Romanian or Germanic languages such as German, Danish, Swedish, Dutch, and Norwegian).

5. The teacher explicitly teaches word analysis.

Like all students, ELLs have words in their oral vocabularies that they do not yet recognize in print. The majority of ELLs will need explicit instruction in English orthography (spelling conventions) and word analysis (Coady & Huckin, 1997; Beaumont, deValenzuela, & Trumbull, 2002; Escamilla, 1999). Many ELLs need to learn how a completely different system of roots, prefixes, suffixes, and other word-formation conventions work. Analysis of comparable words (e.g., *event/ful*, *thank/ful*, *beauti/ful* or *un/happy*, *un/worthy*, *un/product/ive*) helps ELLs see patterns. When a teacher knows even a little of a student's first language, she can engage students in contrastive linguistics activities in which they compare word forms in their first language to those in English (Bruck & Genesee, 1995). For example, English and Spanish have predictable correlations: The *–ity* ending of English is often *–idad* or *–edad* in Spanish; the *–tion* or *–cion* ending in English is often *-cción* in Spanish; and the ending *-ment* in English is often realized as *–miento* in Spanish.

Word analysis skills serve the purpose of vocabulary development as well as word identification and spelling. For example, learning about prefixes and suffixes can also focus on helping students associate them with components of word meaning that will appear repeatedly in their reading.

6. The teacher supports development of metacognitive skills.

The term *metacognitive* refers to purposeful uses of cognitive resources in order to engage in a task. In the case of reading, it means strategically engaging with the text. Good readers read more strategically than do poor readers (Palincsar & David, 1991; Pressley, 2002). For example, good readers monitor their comprehension as they read—asking themselves questions, making predictions about what they are reading, and rereading or otherwise troubleshooting when they have a lapse in comprehension.

Students who read well in a language other than English may have well-developed metacognitive skills. Such readers are likely to transfer these skills to reading in English (Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996); unfortunately, many students do not do so automatically. However, research suggests that ELLs can benefit from instruction in metacognitive strategies such as self-questioning, summarization, clarification, and prediction (Hardin, 2001; Klingner & Vaughn, 1996; Muñiz-Swicegood, 1994; Padrón, 1992).

Many programs for teaching metacognitive strategies use three phases: pre-reading, during reading, and after reading (Palincsar & Brown, 1986; Palincsar & David, 1991; Pressley, 1999; Pressley et al., 1992). Students learn to think about what they already know about a topic (prior knowledge) through self-questioning that is first modeled by the teacher. In the prereading phase, students identify what they want to learn and hypothesize about what they may encounter in a particular narrative or expository text. Teachers can also model for students how they monitor their own comprehension during reading by self-questioning and self-correction of reading errors. After reading, teachers can promote reflection through high-level questions about the reading and subject matter.

7. The teacher scaffolds students' understanding of text structure.

Various strategies help ELLs of all levels understand text structures, or the way that the semantics and syntax of language are organized in a written work (Literacy Matters, 2005). The structure of text varies from language to language and culture to culture in terms of the

organization of a sentence, a paragraph, and the whole text format (e.g., short story, expository essay, and personal narrative). Older ELL students, who have learned to read in another language, may need explicit instruction to understand the text patterns of English (Escamilla, 1991; Söter, 1998; Pérez, 2004). It is critical for all students to have opportunities to read and listen to readings of a wide variety of text types (Hiebert, Pearson, Taylor, Richardson, & Paris, 1998; Hudelson, 1994). In addition, teachers can read to students above their reading level to give them access to more complex text than students can manage independently (Calderón & Minaya-Rowe, 2003; Lapp, Fisher, Flood, & Cabello, 2001).

Graphic organizers are visual scaffolds that reveal to students how texts or information and knowledge are organized (Muth & Alvermann, 1999). Research on some graphic organizers suggests they are useful for all students (Meyer, 1975; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980). They provide students with visual clues to the organization and meaning of the text. Graphic organizers can be used prior to reading as a guide to the organization of content and to build background knowledge, especially for difficult or dense text. When used after reading, they can record what students learned. Graphic organizers include story or text structure charts, Venn diagrams, story maps, timelines, discussion webs, word webs, clusters, thinking maps, and so forth (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

8. The teacher expects and teaches all learners to read and write at high levels.

Fluency—or the ability to read aloud smoothly and with expression—is the outcome of successful language processing. It depends on rapid word identification and familiarity with sentence patterns. The Center for the Improvement of Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) states that if ELLs do not have the opportunity to learn to read in their first languages, they likely need to see and hear hundreds of books over a school year in order to have good models of fluency. CIERA recommends that ELLs participate in read-alouds of difficult books, read along with proficient readers, and listen repeatedly to books read aloud in order to gain fluency in English (Hiebert et al.,

1998). Guided, repeated oral reading involves students' reading passages orally with guidance and feedback from the teacher. This strategy has been recommended for NESs (National Reading Panel, 2000) and has been espoused by many in the second language field (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003; Mora, 2004). Independent oral reading in front of classmates should be expected only of those students whose English reading fluency is well developed (Graves & Fitzgerald, 2003).

In Short…

The culturally competent teacher

- ❒ Learns about families' approaches to literacy in the home and their literacy histories
- ❒ Activates and develops background knowledge through preteaching activities
- ❒ Supports transfer of skills from the first language to English
- ❒ Promotes vocabulary development through a variety of approaches, including using words in context, preteaching key words, constructing semantic maps, and comparing new words to known words in the first language
- ❒ Teaches students about how English words are constructed (morphology and orthography)
- ❒ Supports development of metacognitive skills that students can use before they read, while they read, and after they read to enhance their comprehension
- ❒ Scaffolds students' understanding of text structures
- ❒ Promotes development of fluency through guided and repeated reading

See References for all material cited in Parts I – IV.

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Web Sites

Center for Applied Linguistics
http://www.cal.org

The Cheche Konnen Center
http://chechekonnen.terc.edu/

Comprehensive School Reform: Research-Based Strategies to Achieve High Standards (WestEd)
http://www.wested.org/csrd/guidebook/toc.htm

The English Language Learner Knowledge Base
http://www.helpforschools.com/ELLKBase/guidelines/ESLAccessStandards.shtml

FINE Network at Harvard Family Research Project
http://www.gse.harvard.edu/hfrp

The Knowledge Loom
http://www.knowledgeloom.org/crt/index.jsp

National Association for Bilingual Education
http://www.nabe.org

National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction
Educational Programs
http://www.ncela.gwu.edu

Office for Civil Rights
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/q-ell.htm

Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic
Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA)
http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/oela/index.html

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)
http://www.tesol.org

Teaching Diverse Learners
http://www.lab.brown.edu/tdl/

U.S. Department of Justice, Civil Rights Division, Educational Opportunities Section
http:www.usdoj.gov/crt/edo/faq.htm

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900 Fort Street Mall, Suite 1300
Honolulu, HI 96813-3718
www.prel.org