

### **Pre-Workshop: Glossary of Terms**

AWL: Academic Word List; list of words university-/ college-level students study

ELL: English language learner

Interlanguage: The interference of L1 and L2/ TL

L1: First language

Lexical: The meaning of a term in common usage

Metacognitive reading strategies: Reading strategies learners use on their own to facilitate learning, e.g., think-alouds, reading between the lines, context clues

Pedagogy: The method and practice of teaching

Phonology: Deals with the system of sounds or how sounds are produced in a language

Semantic: The study of meaning in a language

Syntax: The arrangement of words and phrases to create well-formed sentences in a language

TL: Target language

**Workshop Phase I: Reflections on Teachers' Understanding of Linguistics**

<b>THEORY-BASED REFLECTION QUESTIONS</b>	<b>TASKS</b>
<p><b>Q1:</b> What is your understanding of the relationship between ELLs' L1 and TL? <b>A:</b></p>	<p><b>Task 1:</b> Think of situations when you were able to observe that your students' L1 was interfering with their TL in the following areas:</p> <p><b>Syntax:</b></p>          <p><b>Lexical/ Semantic:</b></p>          <p><b>Phonology:</b></p>

<p><b>Q2:</b> What major role should teachers play with regard to ELLs' learning of academic vocabulary and their everyday experiences? <b>A:</b></p>	<p><b>Task 2A:</b> Think of a classroom activity that helps facilitate the learning of academic vocabulary and connects it to their everyday experience.</p> <p><b>Task 2B:</b> Come up with reasons why it makes sense to connect the ELLs' learning of academic vocabulary to their everyday experience.</p>
<p><b>Q3:</b> How should teachers use their knowledge of metacognitive reading strategies in helping ELLs develop their reading skills? <b>A:</b></p>	<p><b>Task 3:</b> Think of a pre-reading activity that will assist ELLs in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- monitoring the comprehension of a text assigned to them</li>          <li>- repair or improve their comprehension of a text assigned to them</li></ul>

## **Workshop Phase II: Examining Pedagogical Practices in Teaching Reading and Writing to ELLs**

The following text is an excerpt from a research report entitled “Effective Practices for Developing Literacy Skills of English Language Learners in the English Language Arts Classroom” (Turkan, Bicknell, & Croft, February 2012, pp. 16-23). In Phase II of this workshop, the five pedagogical practices will be briefly discussed in light of an activity that follows shortly after.

### **Helping ELLs Construct Meaning**

One part of the knowledge base that emerged in relation to teachers’ pedagogical skills in teaching reading and writing to ELLs has to do with facilitating ELLs ability to make meaning of oral and written text. Ajayi (2008) defined “*meaning making* as a process by which learners gain critical consciousness of the interpretation of events in their lives in relation to the world around them. In this way, the meaning that individual learners arrive at after reading a story or watching a video is mediated by their social, cultural, and historical experiences” (p. 211). What is critical to this process are the connections built between learners’ own lives and the experience of learning. When individuals learn to read, the meaning-making process involves receiving and decoding textual or visual scripted input and labeling the input with meaning. The pedagogical skills needed to help ELLs construct meaning expand upon the linguistic knowledge base of utilizing ELLs’ native language in reading instruction, as discussed in the previous section on teachers’ understanding of linguistics.

### **Building From the Known to the Unknown**

By building on ELLs' background knowledge, teachers essentially build schematic connections between *text* and ELLs' *self* (Herrera et al., 2010). That is, whatever exists or does not exist in ELLs' past experiences or background knowledge should be capitalized on to build smooth access to comprehending the text and connecting with it. This is because the schematic background knowledge that teachers help to establish could facilitate ELLs' understanding of the language and concepts and mitigate any comprehension difficulties they may experience. Similarly, in a report from the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, Saunders, O'Brien, Lennon, and McLean (1999) cited building on and making explicit connections between students' existing knowledge and academic content as helpful in transitioning ELLs to mainstream English instruction. The authors found several successful strategies for making such connections when teaching literature in the ELA classroom: (a) building on students' background and existing knowledge base, (b) integrating literature logs to get students to write their answers to specific questions about themes in the story being read, and (c) promoting students' extended discourse through working the text—reading it, rereading it, discussing it, writing about it, and listening to what others have written about it.

### **Using Multiple Modalities**

Another emerging effective practice that concerns helping ELLs construct meaning is to facilitate access to multimodal ways of communicating meaning. That is, teachers should provide ELLs with access to different genres and modes of text such as “reports, newspapers, pictures, songs, manuals, textbooks, narratives, procedures, legal documents, spoken or written words, and the different text types associated with electronic multimedia” (Ajayi, 2008, p. 209). This approach to construction of meaning is situated within a multimodality perspective arguing that a combination of different modes may be needed to convey a message and make meaning as new media dominate public communications. From this perspective, Gee (2003) argued that meaning making involves “learning how

to situate (build) meanings in different domains, be they videogames, computers, movies, television, visual images, literature, and so on” (p. 26).

From a similar perspective, Ajayi (2008) examined the ways in which high school language learners co-constructed word meanings through multimodal representation and drawing upon sociopolitical realities in ELLs’ daily lives. The theoretical orientation and the intervention used in the study was built around notions like *participatory pedagogy*’ and meaning-making used as critical transformation of the social reality. The authors noted that through multimodal representation of a newspaper report (*GOP Congressman Renews Push for Immigration Curbs*) using multiple tools and resources such as a political text, photographs, and a campaign video clip and through activities like meaning-guessing, campaign advertisement, and cartoon strips, as well as group and whole class activities, learners had the opportunity to negotiate meanings of selected vocabulary items and phrases like *permanent status*, *temporary status*, *guest-worker program*, *undocumented immigrants*, *illegal aliens*, and *political asylum* as well as *amnesty*, *opposition*, *advocacy*, *legislation*, *legalization*, *overhaul*, *immigration*, and *anti-immigration*.

### **Designing Collaborative Activities**

Collaboration is another effective teaching practice that supports the teacher skill and knowledge base of helping ELLs construct meaning from text. Teachers should design collaborative activities to provide ELLs with opportunities to fill in gaps in their comprehension of text and to construct meaning. Creating a collaborative classroom environment allows for linguistic interactions with peers and the teacher (Calderón, Hertz-Lazarowitz, & Slavin, 1998). The BCIRC program entailed a series of activities that occur before, during, and after reading and writing in both their first and second languages. These activities involved building background and vocabulary knowledge and allowing ELLs to make predictions while reading and writing. Calderón et al. described a partner-reading, treasure-hunt activity in which students answer a series of questions about “the characters, setting, problems, and problem

solutions...” and “look for clues to support or reject their answers, make inferences, synthesize, and reach consensus” (p. 158). This intervention program highlights the positive effect of the cooperative learning for ELLs, which allows them to engage in linguistically complex interactions around the solution of real problems situated within a story-writing activity. This seems to benefit ELLs both in native-language literacy skills as well as reading and writing skills in English.

In another study, Klingner and Vaughn (2000) also showed the benefits of employing collaborative strategic reading skills in a fifth grade class at an elementary school in a large, metropolitan school district in the southeastern United States. In this study, the process of building collaborative strategic reading skills includes several components: (a) *preview* the topic where students predict what the passage might be about; (b) *click and clunk* where students monitor their reading performance and identify places where the text doesn't make sense; (c) *get the gist* by asking students to restate the main point of the text; and (d) *wrap-up* by having students summarize the main points learned by letting them generate questions

### **Engaging ELLs in Reading and Writing**

Teachers should facilitate ELLs' efforts to connect with the text by constructing meaning in reading. These efforts largely involve a dialogue between the reader and text. Dutro (2002) and Vacca and Vacca (2008) both argued that active engagement in meaning making from the text is a must for ELLs and all readers. Vacca and Vacca characterized engaged readers as motivated, knowledgeable, strategic, and socially interactive. In order to achieve this ideal scenario for all learners, teachers should be able to guide instruction in ways that engage and sustain students in reading in English. One way of providing ELLs with enough linguistic support to participate in this consciousness-raising strategy is through the use of *sentence walls* (Carrier & Tatum, 2006), which are well-formed phrases and sentences that ELLs can resort to whenever they need to express an idea in academic language. The rationale is that ELLs need “prefabricated” word- and sentence-level chunks they might consult whenever they need to join in the conversation

around the content or text (p. 285).

Similarly, Vacca and Vacca (2008) suggested engaging students in active expression of their understanding of the text through the use of discussion webs, which allow them to engage in further exploration of the text and thoughtful discussion of different sides of an issue. The discussion webs recommended by Vacca and Vacca are essentially graphic organizers, which are tools to represent and organize ideas and concepts. The classroom enactment starts with students brainstorming about the ideas they want to contribute to the discussion based on their interactions with the text. At later stages, students are given the opportunity to team with partners to realize and resolve differences in perspective. Finally, they share their ideas and resolutions about the issue with the entire class. Discussion webs could be especially beneficial for ELLs, as they need the encouragement to voice their opinions, which reinforces their engagement in the text and content. While engaging in such activities, ELLs also have the opportunity to phrase their understanding of the text in their own words (Marzano & Pickering, 2006). This sense of ownership is also highlighted by Jacobs (2001), who recognized in her own high school classroom that ELLs became avid readers after a year of reading books of their own choosing and discussing important ideas, quotes, agreements, and questions from those books with their peers and teacher.

Reference:

Turkan, S., Bicknell, J., & Croft, A. (February 2012). Effective Practices for Developing Literacy Skills of English Language Learners in the English Language Arts Classroom. *Research Report ETS RR-12-03*.

**WORKSHOP NOTES:**