Long-Term English Learners: Blending Academic Language and Content

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Some Demographics

- 33% of ELLs in grades 6-12 in NYC schools are long-term English learners (NYC DOE, 2008)

- 33% of ELLs in Chicago secondary schools and 23% in Colorado schools are long-term English learners (Menken, Kleyn & Chae, 2007)

- 59% of the ELLs in 40 districts surveyed in CA are long-term English learners (Olsen, 2010)

- ELLs with 10 years of schooling in CA had less than a 40% chance of meeting criteria to be redesignated as FEP (Parish et al., 2006)

- Note: We have no national data.
Definitions & Factors
What is your definition of a Long-term English Language Learner (LTELL)?
LTLELLs—Definitions Vary

- Middle and high school students
- Still in English language support after 6 or more years in U.S. schools (5+ to 10 yrs.)
- Unable to meet reclassification criteria (English language proficiency exam or other measures, such as state content tests)
Characteristics of LTELls

- Strong oral English skills
- Weak English reading and writing skills
- Weak native language literacy skills
- Poor grades/grade retention
- At-risk for dropping out
- Low personal expectations
- Unassuming
Factors That May Lead to LTELL Status

- Program switching in elementary schools (e.g., bilingual to/from ESL)
- Weak or brief ESL programming
- High mobility and frequent absenteeism
- Transnationalism
- Partial access to the content curricula
- Unidentified learning disabilities
- Socio-emotional issues
Diagnostics
1. Start with Academic Language and Literacy
# Diagnostic Language Tool for Use with Long-term English Learners (Short & Echevarria, 2016)

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2. Look at content area performance

- Is the student performing poorly in all content areas or just one or two?
- Are the areas with poor performance those with high-stakes testing and/or those with heavy reliance on literacy? (Interpret new CCSS tests cautiously.)
- Does the student have a history of poor grades or grade retention?
3. Consider native language literacy skills and opportunities

- Is the student literate in his or her native language?
- Does the student read and write in the L1 on social media?
- Does the student have a broad vocabulary and knowledge of a wide range of topics in the L1?
- What does the student like to do with language?
4. Review the student’s record

- Was the student ever referred for a learning disability assessment? (consider time to referral, cultural barriers)

- What is the student’s educational background?
  - type and length of ESL / bilingual services
  - mobility/transnationalism
  - interrupted schooling
  - performance in the elementary grades

- Does anything in the record indicate socio-emotional issues or trauma?
5. Consider motivation

- What does the student want to do after high school?
- Does the student know what reaching that goal entails? Do the student’s parents or guardians?
- Are other factors (e.g., economics, documentation) limiting the student’s future?
Interventions
Interventions

- Administrative
- Academic
- Structural
- Family and Community
Administrative Strategies

Provide Professional Development & Coaching

- Teachers: to address LTELLs’ needs and to infuse academic literacy in all courses
- Guidance counselors and social workers: to examine educational and personal histories, to probe for socio-emotional issues
- Site administrators: to examine data, program options, partnerships

Hold administrators and staff accountable
Academic Strategies

Data and PD for Academic Interventions

- Assess all language skills for strengths and weaknesses and analyze the results
- If warranted, assess for learning disabilities
- Offer specialized ESL course
- Offer bilingual and native language literacy/AP courses
- Plan individualized interventions – reading programs, computer programs, tutoring
Recognize LTERR Students’ Assets

- First Language/Literacy
- Meta-linguistic Awareness across Languages
- Translanguaging/Code-switching
- Academic Knowledge
- Oral English Skills
- Bicultural Savvy
Target High School Learners

- Technology and multi-modal instruction; online options
- Internships, job-oriented support
- College-credit bearing courses
- Connections with technical/career schools
Suppose the long-term English learners struggle with advanced academic language usage?

Provide professional development for teachers so they can address academic language objectives in their lessons.

- Academic Vocabulary
- Language Skills and Functions
- Language Structures or Grammar
- Language Learning Strategies
### Academic Language: Vocabulary

1. New technical terms
2. General academic terms
3. Multiple-meaning words
4. Similar terms with different meanings
5. Nominalizations
6. Complex noun phrases
7. Synonyms
8. Symbols
9. Same symbol, different meanings
10. Multiple representations of a concept
11. Idioms
Academic Language: Syntax

1. Comparatives
2. Preposition usage
3. Articles and modifier usage
4. Passive voice
5. Word problems and Testing language
6. Logical connectors
7. Similar language, different function
8. Embedded clauses
9. Multiple ways of expressing terms orally
Academic Language: Text Discourse

1. Reading process
2. Text structures and styles
3. Background Knowledge
4. Tone
5. Point of View
Advancing Vocabulary
Select Key Vocabulary Wisely

Academic Vocabulary

Content / Technical

Word Parts Vocabulary

General Academic Process/ Function
Shades of Meaning

- small
- tiny
- miniscule
- microscopic
Word Learning Strategies

- **Prefixes and Suffixes**
  - The top 20 prefixes account for 90% of prefixed words in printed school English.

- **Roots and Base Words**
  - Students can apply morphemic knowledge to new words.

- **Cognates**
  - Effective language learners make use of their native language and literacy skills.
Word Learning Strategies

• Context
  • Guess and replace
  • Read on / Read back

• Syntax / Sentence Structure
  • Analyze for part of speech
  • Look for appositive definition

• Incidental Learning
  • Organize opportunities for English learners to engage with text for pleasure
  • Plan for English learners to interact with native English speakers
Advancing Academic Discussions
Language Functions: Practice & Apply

Partner A: Sentence Frames

- My opinion about ___ is ___
- I don’t like ___ because _____
- I believe that ______

What is your opinion about self-driving cars? Use one of the sentence frames above to complete your idea.
Language Functions: Practice & Apply

Partner B: Sentence Frames

• I agree with you but ___
• I agree with you and ___
• I disagree with you because ___
• I hadn’t thought of that. It makes me think of ___
Increase Sophistication of Language Frames

Ex. *Comparison*

• ____ is the same as ....

↓ One difference is ....

↓ ____ differs from/is similar to ____ in that...

↓ Although both [X and Y] have ____,
but [X] has ... while [Y] has . . .
Advancing Academic Writing
Cloze Paragraph Scaffolds

- Can be deleted words and phrases.
- Can move to paragraph frames.
- Can provide a word bank but no frames.
Character Diaries/Blogs

- Be a raindrop in the water cycle
- Be Lincoln on the train to Gettysburg and then on the train back
- Be a reporter at the first moon launch
- Be a dollar bill in circulation for 5 days
Suppose they need to improve their use of language in math?
The sum of twice a number plus 13 is 75. Find the number.

Oral explanation: I have a number I can call x. I need two times x and I need to add 13. Then I will get 75.

Written solution:

- \(2x + 13 = 75\) I write the equation.
- \(2x + 13 - 13 = 75 - 13\) I need to get x alone. I subtract 13 from both sides.
- \(2x = 62\) I do the math.
- \(2x/2 = 62/2\) I need x alone. I divide both sides by 2.
- \(x = 31\) I find that x equals 31.
The sum of twice a number plus 13 is 75. Find the number.

Oral explanation: The number I have to find will be $x$. If I double $x$ and add 13, it will equal 75.

Written solution:

- $2x + 13 = 75$ I convert the words to an equation.
- $2x + 13 - 13 = 75 - 13$ I begin to isolate $x$ by subtracting 13, the same amount, from both sides.
- $2x = 62$
- $2x/2 = 62/2$ I isolate $x$ by dividing both sides by 2.
- $x = 31$ The result is that $x$ equals 31.
Structural Strategies

- Establish/strengthen an early warning system
- Decrease absenteeism
- Bilingual and dual language courses
- Transition support practices
- Set up Saturday and/or after-school programs
- Flexible scheduling
Family & Community Strategies

- Family literacy programs
- Family outreach (e.g., computers in homes, tutoring onsite in community)
- Social service partnerships
- Business partnerships
- Federal and state actions
- Changing attitudes/Advocacy
Changing Attitudes: Seal of Biliteracy

- Added to a high school diploma
- For students of any language background who demonstrate proficiency in two languages
- Collaboration of ESL, FL, and bilingual teachers
- Offered in states: CA, IL, NJ, NY, TX, WA
- Pending legislation: MA, NM, RI, UT
Long-term English Language Learners

We need research!!!
References and Resources


- Linked Dissertations at USC by Carlos Avila, Merle Ann Bugarin, and Julie Shah on a schoolwide analysis and restructuring
References and Resources


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Thank You