

English Language Arts

The National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) propose that English language arts teachers be able to:

Illustrate the close relationship between how home language, native language, dialect, and a second language are acquired, developed, and utilized in the classroom and can articulate the importance, therefore, of helping students strengthen their language abilities through the provision of developmentally suitable experiences throughout their schooling (NCTE, 2006, p.24).

Vocabulary

Many classrooms with ELLs increase visual input by creating a Word Wall, or a section of the wall that includes key content vocabulary and/or concepts. Word Walls can be used in different ways; they might be used to demonstrate relationships between word forms (*hero*, *heroine*, *heroism*, *heroic*) or between characters and character traits in a novel.

As is common in other content areas, English Language Arts employs vocabulary that has multiple meanings in various contexts, and even across disciplines, like *article*, *body*, *character*, *novel*, *play*, and *problem* (Calderón, 2007). Some cognates to indicate for ELLs in teaching language arts include:

English-Spanish Cognates

irony	ironía	hyperbole	hipérbola	conflict	conflicto
hero	heroe	fable	fibula	anecdote	anécdota
fiction	ficción	comedy	comedia	protagonist	protagonista

Oral Language in Language Arts

In creating a learner-centered classroom, students have more opportunities to practice speaking and listening. As a result, they are more engaged while also being accountable. A popular strategy is literature circles, in which students become “experts” on the target work by assuming different roles. For example, in a group of four, one student might focus on summarizing, another on vocabulary from the chapter, another on theme, and another on notable quotes. Then students interact with each other to fill in the other three focused areas, a type of reciprocal teaching which provides opportunities for ELLs to clarify meaning if necessary.

Reader’s Theater is an effective method to work on students’ oral language development. For example, as part of a unit on folktales, a teacher might select a script that reflects the cultural background of students. Scripts are rife with opportunities to work on reading aloud—for example, stage directions (which consist of emotional adverbs to inform vocal inflection)—and to notice genre-specific features (character roles on the left and absence of quotation marks).

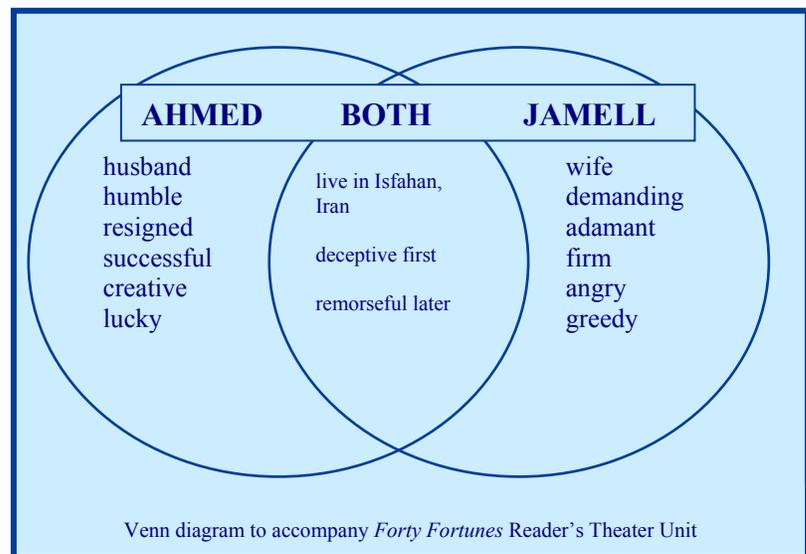
Accessing the Literature

A frequent problem with mainstream resources for ELLs is that they often marginalize the students by not depicting their lives or culture. When teachers use materials that mirror the

populations they serve, students can connect with the texts in a meaningful way, and reflect on their own lives in relation to the reading. Also, teachers can encourage students to choose what they read, since that increases student motivation. However, to insure that the reading level of the text is appropriate, the teacher should coach the students to read one page and if there are more than five words they don't know, they should choose another reading to avoid frustration.

For ELLs to access the novels, poems, or plays being used in class, they need graphic organizers or other types of anticipation guides with key vocabulary or reading strategies before they read the authentic text. A timeline of events in a chapter of a novel, for example, can provide the key points to the students before they wrestle with the actual text. They also should be taught the skills of good readers, such as predicting, re-reading, questioning, and summarizing. Teachers can teach students to use post-it notes in their textbooks, allowing them to react to the text by using a key of symbols for students to use in reacting to the text.

A Venn Diagram can be used to represent characters' similarities and differences or used as a way to brainstorm ideas before writing a compare-contrast essay. Another possibility is a listening guide or concept map with key concepts from the class lecture to be listed in a chart, which can be filled out to the appropriate level of instructional support for the student, and leaves gaps for the students to fill in as they listen.



Writing in Language Arts

Wordless books, which cover a range of topics appropriate for all ages, allow ELL students to integrate writing and reading skills. A student can access the text visually and learn about plot structure, focus on details, or work on predicting, which is a documented trait of good readers. If the students have literacy skills in their home languages, they can write the text to the wordless book, and as they progress add the English translation. Also, many students have difficulty with visualizing a story, so an activity that asks students to draw the main character can help cultivate imagination.

For students who have little or no literacy in either their first or second language, teachers can use the Language Experience Approach, in which students narrate a shared experience (i.e., field trip) they have had while the teacher writes down the story, modeling conventions of writing. For more advanced students, many teachers use journals or online blogs to have students respond to literature, thus integrating reading and writing skills, a constant practice in school.

To Learn More about Teaching Language Arts to ELLs

Web Resources

Aaron Shephard's Web site includes Reader's Theater scripts from a wide range of cultures, including *Forty Fortunes*. <http://www.aaronshep.com/rt/RTE.html#24>

Carroll, P.S. & Hasson, D.J. (2004). Helping ELLs look at stories through literary lenses. *Voices from the Middle*, 11(4). Retrieved May 5, 2008 from http://elearning.ncte.org/section/content/Default.asp?WCI=pgDisplay&WCU=CRSCNT&ENTRY_ID=3F245A2714164520B2F9F65428CEDEC7.

Mary Ellen Dakin's "Hamlet" for English Language Learners: The photo-performance project. <http://www.pbs.org/shakespeare/educators/performance/casestudy1.html>

National Council of Teachers of English (n.d.). *Pathways for teaching and learning with English language learners*. Online professional development course (fee required) available at <http://www.ncte.org/edpolicy/ell/resources/126760.htm>

Nilsen, A.P & Nilsen, D.L.F. (2004). Working under lucky stars: Language lessons for multilingual classrooms. *Voices from the Middle*, 11(4). Retrieved May 5, 2008 from http://elearning.ncte.org/section/content/Default.asp?WCI=pgDisplay&WCU=CRSCNT&ENTRY_ID=29ACA1F9703143A7BDAFB4A841E9E4E8.

Ms. Vogel's Guide to Blogging. <http://www.arlingtoncareercenter.com/msvogel>

A number of Web sites maintain bibliographies of culturally appropriate texts for children and adolescents:

The Barahona Center for the study of books in Spanish for Children and http://csbs.csusm.edu/csbs/www.book_eng.book_home?lang=SP

¡Colorín Colorado!. <http://www.colorincolorado.org/read>

Get Caught Reading's *New List of Recommended Titles Promote Literacy among Nation's Hispanic and Latino Community*. http://www.getcaughtreading.org/pressreleases/dia_pr.htm#reading%20list

The Lexile Framework for Reading rates books according to grade level, and teachers can search a database for books at a certain level. <http://www.lexile.com/EntrancePageHtml.aspx?1>

Print Resource

Cassady, J.K. (1998). Wordless books: No-risk tools for inclusive middle-grade classrooms. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, 41(6) 428-432.
