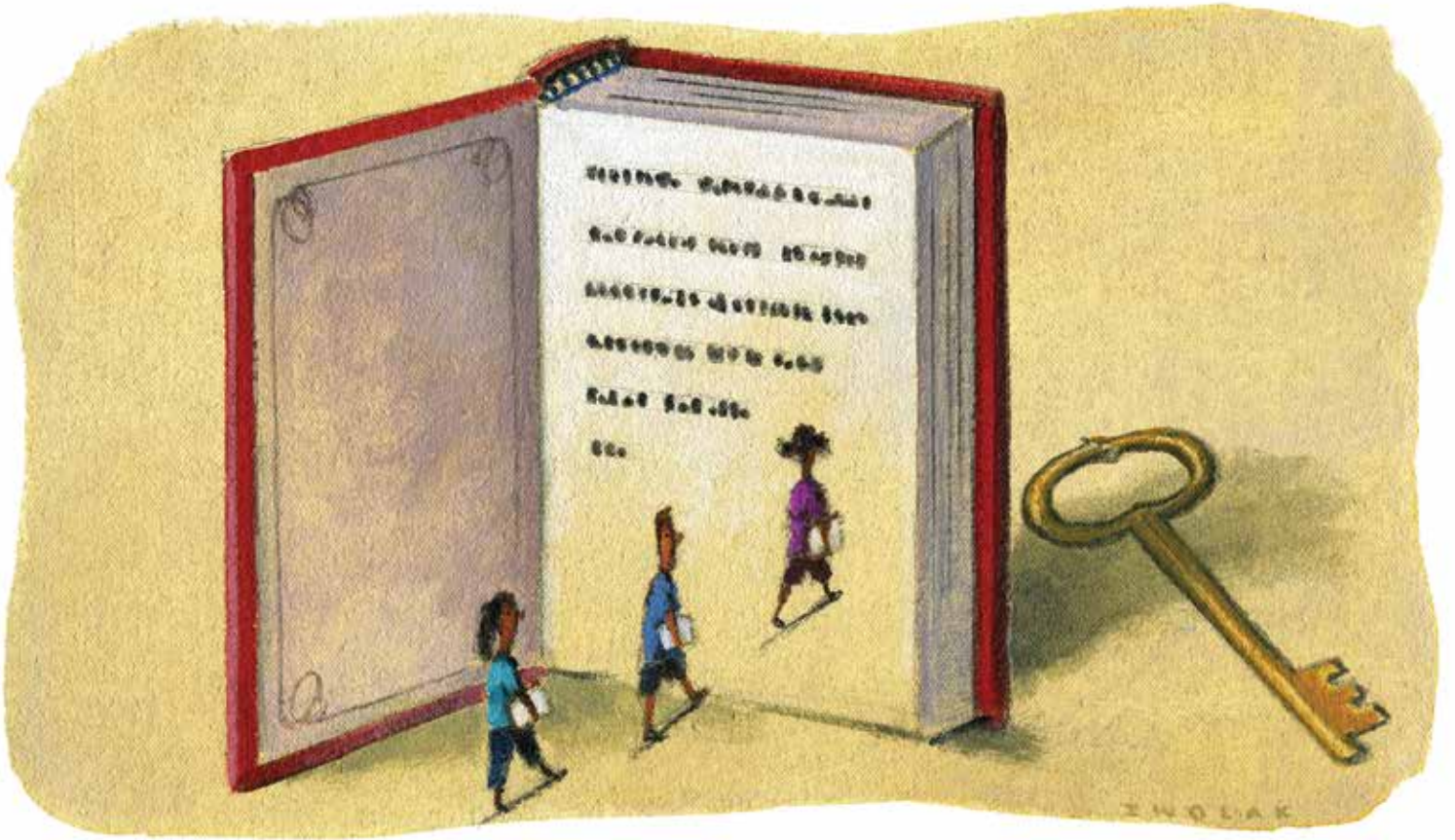# English Language Development
Guidelines for Instruction

By William Saunders, Claude Goldenberg, and David Marcelletti

Despite a growing US literature on educating English learners (ELs) and an upsurge in studies of vocabulary interventions,[1] surprisingly little research examines the effects of instruction on ELs' English language development (ELD). Since the Supreme Court's 1974 *Lau v. Nichols* decision affirming that English learners must be guaranteed a "meaningful education," controversy over bilingual versus English-only education has dominated research and policy discussions of ELs. Many of the programs involved in these studies included ELD instruction, but studies sought to measure the effects of the program on academic achievement, primarily reading, rather than estimating the effects of ELD instruction on English language acquisition.

This article synthesizes research that provides guidelines for ELD instruction. Many resources, such as theory, ELD standards, practitioner experience, and published programs, might provide such guidance. We focus on individual studies and research syntheses that point to how educators might provide effective ELD instruction—instruction that focuses specifically on helping English learners develop English language skills and that is delivered in a portion of the school day separate from the academic content that all students need to learn.

Using existing research to identify effective guidelines for ELD instruction is problematic. There is little that focuses specifically on K–12 ELD instruction for ELs in US schools. In the absence of a comprehensive body of research, the field of ELD instruction has been driven mostly by theory. The result is a large body of accepted practices that are not adequately supported by research. Currently, the dominant theoretical perspective of educators is "communicative language teaching." There are two primary tenets of communicative language teaching: (1) The goal of second-

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language education is to develop learners' communicative competence (more so than formal accuracy), and (2) communication is both a goal and means for developing language.[2] From this perspective, second-language learning is a social process in which language develops largely as a result of meaningful and motivated interaction with others,[3] much as a first language does.[4] Language *in use* is emphasized more than *knowledge about* language.

Teachers might note that some of the practices they have come to accept as standard or even exemplary might not be represented among the guidelines we report here. This, of course, does not necessarily mean that teachers are engaged in "wrong" practices, but rather that the standard wisdom of the field needs to be examined further through the lens of research. For example, second-language acquisition teachers, theorists, and researchers have

ELD instruction—engaging in social interactions inside and outside of school and in other pursuits requiring English proficiency (e.g., obtaining news, serving as a juror, voting, shopping, banking, and locating and using information)—we would argue that preparation for academic studies taught in English remains the top priority because of its relevance to school and career success. Helping ELs succeed in academic contexts is no doubt the most challenging goal and most likely the greatest need to emerge in recent English learner research.

ELD instruction should not be confused with sheltered instruction (see "Unlocking the Research on English Learners," which begins on page 4 of this issue). The essence of sheltered instruction is this: where use of the primary language is not possible, and thus students are being taught in a language they do not fully

In ELD instruction, language is the primary objective and content is secondary. In sheltered instruction, content is primary and language is secondary.

realized that exposure and interaction might help promote fluency and communicative competence, but they are not sufficient for native-like proficiency.[5] Advanced—ideally, to the point of native-like—English proficiency is imperative for English learners in the United States, indeed for any language-minority student whose future and livelihood will be influenced by his or her competence in the dominant social language. We have therefore seen a renewed focus on form (that is, "correct usage" of vocabulary, grammar, norms of interaction in particular circumstances, etc.) as a critical element of second-language instruction.

We begin with an explanation and discussion of ELD instruction, what it is and is not. We then provide a brief description of the research base for ELD instruction and why it is so small. Subsequently, we report research related to 14 guidelines relevant to ELD instruction. The 14 guidelines are grouped into four categories representing concentric circles of influence, from the most global (the broad basis for school and district ELD policies) to the most specific (how ELD should be taught).

English Language Development Instruction

ELD instruction is designed specifically to advance English learners' knowledge and use of English in increasingly sophisticated ways. In the context of the larger effort to help English learners succeed in school, ELD instruction is designed to help them learn and acquire English to a level of proficiency (e.g., advanced) that maximizes their capacity to engage successfully in academic studies taught in English. Although there might be multiple goals for

comprehend, instruction is "sheltered" (or adjusted) in order to help students learn skills and knowledge in the content areas—English language arts, math, science, social studies, physical education, and the arts. In doing so, sheltered instruction ideally also supports ongoing learning of English, particularly academic language. So, while the primary goal of sheltered instruction is academic success in the content areas, the primary goal of ELD instruction is learning English.

The distinctions we are making might appear contrived and artificial, since so much of academic content learning is highly language-dependent. It is particularly hard to know where the dividing line is between English *language arts* (content area) and English *language development*. But although the distinction between ELD and sheltered instruction can get blurred, our assumption is that it is better to keep them distinct and for teachers to be clear in their thinking when they are planning, delivering, and evaluating ELD instruction and when they are planning, delivering, and evaluating sheltered content instruction. As we discuss below, clarity about objectives contributes to effective instruction. In ELD instruction, language is the primary objective and content is secondary. In sheltered instruction, content is primary and language is secondary.

The Research Base for ELD Instruction: Why Is It Small?

This article draws heavily on six research syntheses, including meta-analyses that are especially useful because they pool the

results from multiple studies and can offer more confidence in the findings. We also draw on a few studies relevant to ELD instruction that were published subsequent to these six syntheses and meta-analyses, as well as on other broader syntheses that, while not focused specifically on EL populations, are applicable to ELD instruction (e.g., a review of research on grouping[6]).

The six major syntheses and meta-analyses represent divergent populations and contexts:

- The first[7] casts a wide net across the entire field of second-language acquisition. It suggests 10 principles of instructed language learning but notes that "research and theory do not afford a uniform account of how instruction can best facilitate language learning" and calls these principles "provisional specifications."[8]

> This article draws heavily on six key research syntheses and meta-analyses; it also integrates subsequent studies relevant to ELD instruction and broader research applicable to ELD instruction.

- The second[9] synthesizes 50 K–12 studies conducted within the United States and mostly involving Spanish-speaking English learners.
- The third[10] addresses US and international studies involving primarily foreign-language contexts at the university level and a variety of primary and second languages.
- The fourth[11] analyzes both classroom and laboratory studies involving foreign-language, second-language, and ESL (English as a second language) contexts and populations.
- The fifth[12] focuses on studies of immersion, primarily French immersion programs implemented in Canada.
- The sixth[13] draws mainly upon US and international studies of foreign language instruction involving primarily college and adult education contexts.

In sum, although there is considerable research on second-language instruction broadly defined, we have a relatively small body of research to guide the design and delivery of K–12 ELD instruction specifically. Many studies are relevant to ELD instruction (e.g., language use, peer interaction, rates of proficiency attainment), but few explicitly focus on instruction or, more importantly, the effects of instruction. Even research on second-language instruction broadly defined does not provide a basis for universally accepted principles of instruction.[14] Given the research base, we have chosen to be inclusive. Rather than rule out studies and meta-analyses involving widely different populations and contexts (e.g., college-age and adult learners), we have

chosen to review them and interpret them as best we can for their relevance to K–12 ELD instruction.* Furthermore, there are several important questions about ELD instruction for which we have no direct research, not even in different second-language acquisition contexts. For example, should districts prioritize ELD instruction? Should students be grouped by language proficiency levels for ELD instruction? Should teachers use specific language objectives? For these questions, we draw on the larger educational research literature, even though those studies are not based on ELD or second-language instruction or conducted with EL populations.

ELD Guidelines and the Related Research

This section explains 14 ELD guidelines and the research on which they are based. The guidelines are organized into four groups, each group framed around a driving question. The first group—global policy guidelines—answers the questions of *whether* and *to whom* schools should provide explicit ELD instruction. The second group—organizational guidelines—takes up the question of *how* ELD instruction should be organized in schools. The third group—curricular focus guidelines—addresses *what* should be taught during ELD instruction. Finally, the fourth group—instructional guidelines—focuses on the *pedagogical* question of how ELD should be taught.

Group 1: Global policy guidelines: What should state, district, and school policy commit to for ELD instruction?

The available evidence suggests the following major commitments: schools should make ELD part of the program of instruction for English learners; they should do so for ELs at *all* levels of proficiency; and they should make the presence, consistency, and quality of ELD instruction a strong and sustained priority.

1. Providing ELD instruction is better than not providing it.
Existing research does not provide sufficient basis for determining the most effective methods of ELD instruction with total confidence. However, there is ample evidence that providing ELD instruction, in some form, is more beneficial than not providing it. Contemporary audiences may perhaps find it difficult to conceive, but three decades ago "Does second-language instruction make a difference?"[16] was a viable question. A dominant view (then and for some time after) was the "monitor" hypothesis,[17] which proposed that formal instruction is of limited utility for second-language acquisition; instead, large amounts of exposure to comprehensible input in authentic communicative contexts is critical. This hypothesis posited that although second-language instruction might help learners learn some rules, language forms, and the like, this type of learning is not very useful for *language acquisition*—that is, being able to speak and understand a lan-

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*For a complete discussion of the strength of the evidence for each of the 14 guidelines based on population, outcomes, and replication, see "Research to Guide English Language Development Instruction," by William Saunders and Claude Goldenberg.[15] See also the listing of the 14 guidelines appearing on page 23 of this article that includes Saunders and Goldenberg's original classification in terms of strength of evidence for each guideline.

guage in natural conversations and authentic contexts. However, a review published 30 years ago of studies comparing second-language *instruction* with second-language *exposure*[18] concluded that instruction indeed aided second-language learning. This finding was true for young as well as older learners and at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels. There are certainly benefits to exposure—that is, living, working, and going to school with English speakers (or any target language)—as well as to sheltered instruction that seeks to make academic subjects comprehensible. But ELD instruction clearly has added benefits.

A more recent meta-analysis[19] revisited this question and asked: How effective is second-language instruction overall and

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in comparison with exposure and communication with speakers of a second language? It found that focused second-language instruction (designed to teach specific aspects of the second language) is more effective than conditions that do not provide focused second-language instruction (including exposure only, minimally focused instruction, and minimal exposure). Students who received focused second-language instruction made more than five times the gains of students who did not.[20]

An important study[21] found that providing kindergarten and first-grade students with an "English-oracy intervention" resulted in more accelerated ELD growth compared with students in control schools who received typical "ESL instruction." The ELD intervention, which was equally effective with students in either English immersion or bilingual education, comprised (a) daily tutorials with a published ELD program, (b) storytelling and retelling with authentic, culturally relevant literature and leveled questions from easy to difficult, and (c) an academic oral language activity using a "Question of the Day." One important caveat: students who received the experimental treatment also received more ELD instruction than students in the control schools, so it is therefore impossible to rule out the effects of additional time independent of the particular curriculum and instruction used. The study is nonetheless important in demonstrating the value added by ELD instruction even in an English immersion context wherein students receive instruction in English throughout the day.
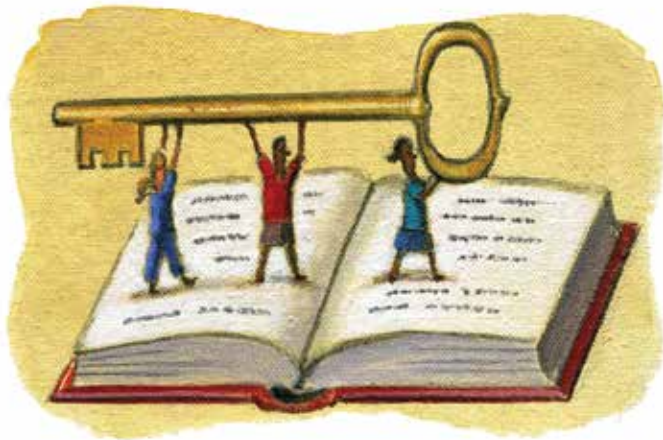
2. ELD instruction should continue at least until ELs attain advanced English language ability.

This guideline emerges from evidence about the rate at which students achieve advanced levels of proficiency. Students' academic English—both oral language proficiency and literacy—

develops over time (five or more years). The evidence regarding literacy development has been reported and debated and theorized about for more than 25 years.[22] The evidence regarding oral English development among English learners has received much less direct attention. However, one synthesis of research on oral language[23] provides estimates based on a compilation of a small number of K–12 US studies that contained longitudinal or cross-sectional oral language outcomes. Summarizing across the studies (primarily elementary grade levels) and the various measures, it reported the following:

a. English learners typically require four to six years to achieve what would be considered "early advanced" proficiency (level 4, where level 1 is beginner and level 5 is advanced).
b. Average oral English proficiency approached native-like proficiency (level 5, advanced) by grade 5 in fewer than half of the available studies.
c. Progress from beginning to middle levels of proficiency is fairly rapid (from level 1 to 3), but progress from middle to upper levels of proficiency (from level 3 to 5) slows considerably—in other words, there is evidence of a *plateau effect*, where many English learners reach a middle level of English proficiency and make little progress thereafter.
d. As evident in one study that allowed for comparisons with native English-speaker norms,[24] the gap between ELs and native speakers increased across grade levels.

The hypothesis, then, is this: if English learners continue to receive explicit ELD instruction even after they reach middle levels of English proficiency, and as they move into early advanced and advanced levels, they can more rapidly attain native-like levels of oral proficiency and avoid the plateau many experience before becoming advanced speakers of English. Two assumptions underlie this hypothesis. First, the hypothesis assumes that English learners typically do not receive ELD instruction once they get to middle proficiency levels and, even less so, as they move into early advanced and advanced levels. Second, it assumes that the lack of ELD instruction is one reason for the stagnation. Our observations at school sites and a new study[25] corroborate these assumptions. With few exceptions, schools tend not to provide an ELD block, pull-out, or coursework once English learners pass the middle proficiency levels.

3. The likelihood of establishing and sustaining an effective ELD instructional program increases when schools and districts make it a priority.

Considerable research suggests that a sustained and coherent focus on academic goals in schools and districts is associated with higher levels of student achievement. However, because of the near absence of experimental research and detailed case studies in this area, it is difficult to draw firm conclusions about cause and effect. Moreover, some researchers have concluded that distal factors such as school and district policies are too removed from students' daily experience to have much impact on their achievement.[26] There is nonetheless at least some consensus in the published literature that what gets emphasized in schools and districts can influence what teachers do and students learn. Numerous dimensions of school and district functioning—leadership, common goals and curricula, professional development, ongoing

support and supervision, regular assessments that inform instruction—are levers that school and district administrators can use to help shape the academic experiences of students.[27]

The same holds true for English learners: what school and district leaders emphasize influences what happens in classrooms and what students learn. At least two studies[28] found that relatively high-achieving California schools with high concentrations of ELs shared various characteristics that converged on their making academic achievement a priority. At the school level, according to principals, there was a school-wide focus on ELD and standards-based instruction; shared priorities and expectations regarding the education of English learners; and curriculum,

instruction, and resources targeted at them. District administrators cited a shared vision and plan for EL achievement and professional development, resources, and school and classroom organization to support achievement. Smaller intervention studies have reported complementary findings.[29]

Although far from definitive, available research suggests that one way to promote higher levels of ELD among English learners is to make sure it is a school- and district-wide priority. As is true in other areas of academic achievement, the direction set by school and district leadership, combined with consistent, focused, and effective implementation and follow-up, is likely to influence what is emphasized in classrooms and what students learn.

Group 2: Organizational guidelines:
How should ELD instruction be organized in school?

School personnel should strongly consider establishing within the daily schedule, and without compromising access to the core curriculum (English language arts and all other content areas), a block of time dedicated exclusively to ELD instruction. To the greatest extent possible, ELs should be grouped by language proficiency levels for their ELD instruction.

4. A separate, daily block of time
should be devoted to ELD instruction.

Two studies offer guidance on whether ELD instruction should be provided during a separate time of the school day, as typically happens with reading, math, and the like. One[30] found small (but still statistically significant) positive effects on oral language pro-

ficiency among Spanish-speaking kindergartners who received ELD instruction during a separate block of time. Compared with kindergartners whose teachers integrated ELD instruction in their larger language arts block, kindergartners from ELD block classrooms made greater gains on end-of-year measures of oral English proficiency and also word identification.* The study included more than 1,200 students from 85 classrooms in 35 schools spread across Southern California and Texas. The positive effects of an ELD block were found in both English immersion and bilingual education programs. Even in the English immersion classrooms, where instruction was delivered almost exclusively in English, English learners provided with a separate ELD instructional block

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outperformed English learners whose teachers tried to integrate ELD in the language arts block.

What explains this effect? The researchers[31] found that most of the ELD block time was devoted to oral English language *activities* like sharing personal experiences, identifying and naming colors, and describing picture cards. They conjecture that, although outcomes were significant, the magnitude of the effects may have been small because of the lack of explicit language teaching. In other words, establishing a separate block of time for ELD instruction is probably beneficial—perhaps in part because it helps teachers focus on English language itself and promotes both listening and speaking in English—but the size of the benefit likely depends on what teachers actually do within the ELD block.

Another study addressed both questions: whether a separate ELD block *and* an explicit ELD program are beneficial for English learners' oral language development. The study[32] included nine classrooms representing three conditions: (1) classrooms with a separate ELD block taught by teachers delivering an explicit ELD program being evaluated, (2) classrooms with a separate ELD block taught by teachers delivering ELD derived from various components the individual teachers culled from published sources, and (3) classrooms without a separate ELD block taught by teachers who were integrating ELD during their language arts time (where they used a published reading program). Students in all three conditions made significant gains over the year, but the gains were not equivalent. Students in condition 1 (separate ELD

*See guideline 8 for a discussion of teaching literacy during ELD instruction.

block using an explicit ELD program being evaluated) scored significantly higher than did students in conditions 2 (separate ELD block using materials that teachers themselves pulled together) and 3 (ELD integrated with language arts).

One of the studies of California schools mentioned previously[33] lends further support to this guideline insofar as high-achieving schools with high concentrations of English learners tended to emphasize ELD instruction and most utilized a separate daily block of time to deliver ELD instruction.
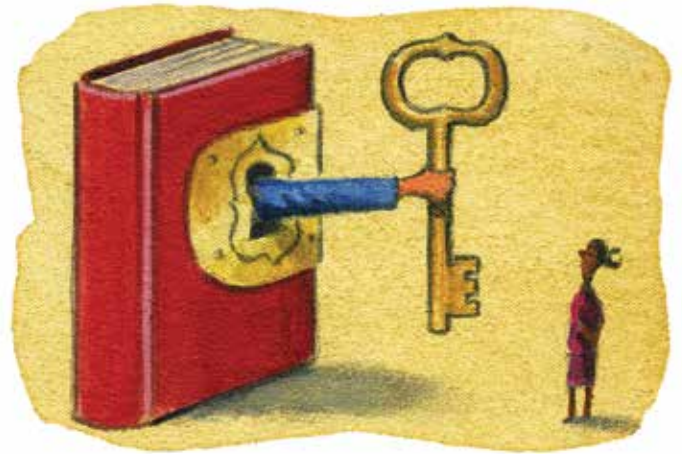
5. English learners should be carefully grouped by language proficiency for ELD instruction, but they should not be segregated by language proficiency throughout the rest of the day.

Should ELs be grouped with other ELs or kept with English speakers? If grouped with other ELs, should they be with others at simi-

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lar language levels, or should they be in mixed language-level groups? If they are grouped with others at similar language levels, for what purposes and for how much of the school day? We know of no research that answers these questions directly. However, many studies have examined the pros and cons of different types of grouping arrangements in other content areas, primarily reading and mathematics. This research[34] suggests the following:

a. Keeping students of different achievement/ability levels in entirely separate (homogeneous) classes for the entire school day (and throughout the school year) leads to depressed achievement among lower-achieving students with little to no benefit for average and higher-achieving students. A possible exception is extremely high-achieving students (sometimes referred to as "gifted"), whose achievement can be significantly enhanced in homogeneous classes with other extremely high-achieving students. We have found no studies that have looked at grouping practices for extremely high-achieving English learners.

b. Students in mixed (heterogeneous) classrooms can be productively grouped by achievement level for instruction in specific subjects (e.g., math or reading). Groups can be formed with students in the same classroom or students in different classrooms (the latter is sometimes called the "Joplin plan"). In contrast to keeping students in homogeneous classes throughout the day, grouping students by achievement level in certain subjects will result in enhanced achievement at all ability levels

if (1) instruction is tailored to students' instructional levels, and (2) students are frequently assessed and regrouped as needed to maintain an optimal match with their instructional needs (that is, students are taught what they need to know to make continual progress).

To the extent that second-language learning is analogous to learning in other curriculum areas, findings from the ability-grouping literature serve as a useful starting place to make decisions about how to group ELs. These findings suggest that English learners should not be segregated into classrooms consisting of only ELs, much less into classrooms consisting of all low-achieving ELs. Instead, English learners should be in mixed-ability classrooms and then grouped by English language proficiency specifically for ELD instruction. Moreover, they should be regu-

larly assessed to monitor their progress and to make certain that instruction and group placement are well suited to their language-learning needs. Presumably, as ELs attain proficiency in English, they can and should receive increasing amounts of instruction with students who are already proficient in English.

Group 3: Curricular focus guidelines: What should be taught during ELD instruction?

The available evidence suggests that ELD instruction should explicitly teach, and engage students in consciously studying, the elements of the English language as applicable to both academic and conversational language, with significant time devoted to speaking and listening, and particular attention to meaning and communication.

6. ELD instruction should explicitly teach forms of English (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, morphology, functions, and conventions). Language forms refer to standard, formal aspects of a language—words, sentence constructions, and generally what is considered to be "correct" or "grammatical" usage, such as subject-verb agreement, possessives, the order of adjectives and the nouns they modify, and so on. The essential body of evidence on teaching language forms explicitly comes from studies[35] in primarily college and adult-level foreign-language contexts, where explicit instruction consistently produced stronger results than implicit instruction. Here, explicit instruction means either (a) instructors explain a language element (a rule or a form) to students and then

provide opportunities for them to study or practice the element with many examples, or (b) instructors engage students in tasks containing many examples of a particular form or rule and then direct students' attention to the language element so that students arrive at the rule by themselves or with the teacher's guidance. Explicit instruction included both approaches to studying features of the second language. Instructional treatments were classified as implicit in cases where instructors did not present or explain the language element and did not direct students' attention to the language form. On average, explicit instructional approaches were more than twice as effective as implicit approaches.

As we have noted, most of the evidence for explicitly teaching language forms comes from studies with college and adult students. In addition, the great majority of the studies were of short duration and narrow in scope—teaching a specific feature of language (for example, verb tense, adverb placement, relative pronouns, or *wh-* questions) and then measuring the extent to which students learned that feature. However, the hypothesis that emerges from this body of evidence is corroborated by other reviews of research. For example, a recent review[36] found that exposure to a second language in meaning-based school programs designed to promote second-language learning (e.g., content-based second-language instruction) successfully develops comprehension, oral fluency, self-confidence, and communicative abilities, but tends not to develop as fully other features of the second language, such as pronunciation and morphology, syntax, and pragmatics. Explicit instructional attention to forms is likely to facilitate students' second-language learning in a way that relying solely on meaning- and communication-oriented instruction alone will not.[37] Another review of research[38] posits the same hypothesis based on studies from French immersion programs.

The term *explicit* should be interpreted carefully. Explicit instruction is often associated with direct instruction. Indeed, direct instruction is, by definition, explicit (and, on average, effective). However, it is not the only form of explicit instruction. Most models of direct instruction[39] typically involve an explanation, demonstration, or presentation of the concept or skill in the early part of the lesson, followed by various forms of practice, feedback, and assessment. As such, direct instruction generally takes a deductive approach to teaching and learning. Explicit instruction can be inductive as well. For example, in the review discussed above with college and adult students, some learners received a certain amount of experience with a language form (e.g., possessives or interrogatives), and then were directed to attend to the form or to focus on deriving the underlying rule or nature of the form.[40] The key point is that instruction that explicitly focuses students' attention on the targeted language form produces higher levels of second-language learning, at least in the short term that the studies examined, than instruction that does not. Focusing the learners' attention is also a central concept in other researchers' principles of instructed language learning.[41]

One aspect of language development that has received minimal attention from K–12 researchers is "pragmatics." Pragmatics refers to understanding and using the target language in genuine interactive situations where language formalisms can take a back seat to receiving or getting a message across. For example, there are discourse norms that dictate how and whether one disagrees with a peer or a teacher without generating negative feelings or

breaking down the communication. Classroom teaching can help second-language learners understand and use these pragmatic rules and norms,[42] but instructional studies are again limited to adult second-language learners. There are no instructional studies with which we are familiar that focus on K–12 ELs.[43]

7. ELD instruction should emphasize academic language as well as conversational language.

Nearly two decades ago, a pair of researchers provided a succinct definition of academic language: "the language that is used by teachers and students for the purposes of acquiring new knowledge and skills … imparting new information, describing abstract ideas, and developing students' conceptual understanding."[44] Expanding on this definition, we think *academic language* refers to the specialized vocabulary, grammar, discourse/textual, and

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functional skills associated with academic instruction and mastery of academic material and tasks. In the simplest terms, *academic language* is the language that is needed in academic situations such as those students encounter during classroom instruction or reading texts.[45] These would obviously refer to academic texts but also include many newspaper and magazine articles or other nonfiction that the Common Core State Standards call for, which are information-dense and presume certain background knowledge as well as familiarity with key vocabulary and sentence structures.

It is widely believed that successful performance in school requires proficiency in academic language and that a major objective of education for both majority- and minority-language students is teaching the academic language skills they need to master the diverse subjects that make up the curriculum. For example, a group of researchers[46] found that performance on highly decontextualized tasks, such as providing a formal definition of words, predicted academic performance, whereas performance on highly contextualized tasks, such as face-to-face communication, did not.

Definitions of academic language often contrast it with language used in everyday social situations. The first researcher to propose a distinction between basic communication and academic language,[47] for example, characterized academic language as decontextualized and cognitively demanding, whereas social language tends to be more contextualized and less cognitively demanding. As a result, academic language tends to draw on

more-specialized technical vocabulary, to use more-complex grammatical constructions, and to be more precise in its intended meaning. Others have highlighted the nature of the vocabulary that characterizes academic versus everyday language use: academic language tends to use less-common, more-technical, and highly specialized vocabulary in contrast to that which is used in everyday conversations.[48]

The premise that ELD instruction should focus on both social, interpersonal language and academic language is not controversial. ELs require both kinds of proficiency. That there should be greater emphasis on academic language within ELD instruction, however, is a more recent hypothesis. Although there is, as yet, virtually no research that has examined empirically the effects of instruction focused specifically on academic language, the hypothesis emerges from at least two interrelated findings. First, studies consistently find that ELs require from five to seven years to achieve native-like proficiency in oral language and literacy.[49] Since academic language probably plays an increasingly important role in defining what actually constitutes language proficiency as students go up the grade levels, it is reasonable to hypothesize that a focus on academic language might help students attain advanced language proficiency more quickly. The second finding is that the rate at which students acquire proficiency tends to slow or even plateau as they move to higher levels of proficiency.[50] Since higher levels of proficiency tend to be characterized by more-academic uses of language, it is reasonable to hypothesize that a greater focus on academic language, especially at the middle and upper levels of proficiency, might minimize that plateauing effect.

8. ELD instruction should incorporate reading and writing, but should emphasize listening and speaking.

Along with explicit ELD instruction, programs for ELs should include literacy instruction,[51] sheltered content area instruction as needed,[52] and primary language support or instruction where possible.[53] In such a comprehensive program, it would seem most beneficial to emphasize speaking and listening during ELD instruction. Although speaking and listening are emphasized in other parts of the instructional day, the textual demands of literacy and content area instruction no doubt need to be given priority during those instructional times. It is likely that time allotted for ELD is the one opportunity to make speaking and listening a priority.

The importance of oral English proficiency for ELs is well established in the research literature. With increasing oral English proficiency, English learners are more likely to use English, and more frequent use of English tends to be correlated with subsequent gains in oral English proficiency.[54] In addition, with increasing oral proficiency in English, ELs are more likely to interact and establish relationships with native English-speaking peers, leading to more opportunities to use English.[55] With increasing oral English proficiency, ELs also tend to use more complex language-learning strategies that allow them to monitor language use and interact more effectively with others.[56] Finally, as oral English proficiency develops, ELs demonstrate a wider range of language skills, including skills associated with more-academic uses of language, specifically higher-level question forms[57] and the capacity to define words.[58]

Several studies have documented a positive relationship between oral English proficiency and English reading achievement.[59] Moreover, the relationship between oral English proficiency and English reading achievement is stronger for measures that are associated with more-academic aspects of oral language proficiency. For example, the number of *different* words English learners use during an interview correlates more strongly with reading achievement than the total number of words they use ($r=.63$ and $r=.40$, respectively).[60] The relationship between oral

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English proficiency and English literacy strengthens across the grades, arguably because both are similarly influenced by schooling and both are indicative of academic success. In one study,[61] correlations between English reading achievement and quality measures of English learners' word definitions increased from $r=.16$ in grade 2 to $r=.50$ in grade 5.

Two studies provide evidence suggesting that devoting more instructional time to listening and speaking yields significantly higher levels of oral language proficiency. Among kindergarten ELs, one study[62] found that more time spent on oral English language instruction leads to stronger oral language outcomes without compromising literacy outcomes. Teachers who produced the strongest outcomes (oral and literacy) devoted approximately 60 percent of their ELD block time to oral language activities (without text) and 40 percent to literacy-related activities (the average daily time allotment for ELD was 37 to 40 minutes). Among first-grade ELs, another study[63] found that more time on listening and speaking (approximately 90 percent of the ELD block time) targeted toward language elements produced significantly higher oral English language outcomes than less time on listening and speaking (approximately 50 percent of the ELD block time) that did not target specific language elements.

9. ELD instruction should integrate meaning and communication to support explicit teaching of language.

Meaning, of course, plays a central role in language use. We use language to express and comprehend meaningful communication with others and to help build understanding for ourselves.

Meaning also plays a central role in language learning insofar as being able to express and comprehend meaningful communication in the language being learned probably motivates and compels language learning. Although there is little controversy about the role of meaning and communication in language use—and by *communication* we mean both receiving and sending messages—their role in language *instruction* is more complicated. Should authentic, meaningful communication drive instruction? Or, alternatively, should explicit teaching of language forms drive instruction? Research on second-language learning and acquisition has advanced over the last two decades in coming to understand that instructed language learning must involve meaning and communication, but it also must direct

students' attention to forms and functions of the language being learned. No doubt, the interplay between meaning-making and conscious attention to language vary for different aspects of language, levels of second-language proficiency, the age of the learner, the learner's first language, and other factors.[64] Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient empirical evidence to fully understand this dynamic interplay.

We constructed the wording of this guideline based on our review of the literature relative to the focus of this article: *ELD instruction should integrate meaning and communication to support explicit teaching of language.* Communicating meaning and providing explicit teaching are both important. However, we propose that communication and meaning should support explicit teaching of language, not necessarily drive ELD instruction. In other words, communication and meaning should be used to motivate and facilitate second-language learners' acquisition and use of targeted language forms.

A recent review[65] of primarily second-language immersion studies provides one source of evidence supporting the importance of incorporating meaning and communication in language-learning contexts. But it also points out the need for better understanding of how to balance meaning and communication with explicit language teaching. Drawing primarily from French immersion studies (K–12, college, and adults), it notes both the successes and limitations of such programs: students instructed through carefully designed programs that immerse students in content study and language study consistently produce levels of second-language proficiency that exceed the levels achieved by

students who study a second language simply as one more school subject. The content emphasis of the French immersion studies exemplifies consciously communicating meaning—in this case, the meaning and communication associated with studying academic content. However, the review also highlights another set of findings from French immersion studies: "What emerges from these studies is that immersion students are second language speakers who are relatively fluent and effective communicators, but non-targetlike [that is, not fully proficient] in terms of grammatical structure and non-idiomatic in the lexical choices and pragmatic expression—in comparison to native speakers of the same age."[66] It concludes that language immersion programs are likely to improve language learning by more strategically and

> Communication and meaning should be used to motivate and facilitate second-language learners' acquisition and use of targeted language forms.

systematically teaching and helping students explicitly attend to language forms without compromising the effects of content-based, meaning-oriented pedagogy.

The study[67] discussed earlier that compared nine classrooms representing three conditions (which concluded that a separate ELD block with an ELD program was more effective than either a separate ELD block with materials teachers pulled together or ELD integrated with language arts) illustrates this guideline. Meaning and communication can support explicit teaching of language during ELD instruction. All three conditions in the study involved meaning and meaning-making, primarily by focusing on content, concepts, and vocabulary that first-grade students were studying in their English language arts units and reading selections. However, the meaning or meaning-making aspects of the lessons from condition 1 (which produced the strongest outcomes) were utilized *to support* the learning of specific language forms. The teacher's modeling and explanation of how to use the language form (e.g., "Where did X sail? X sailed to Y."), and the practice students engaged in, were supported by at least three dimensions of the lesson that involved meaning and meaning-making: First, the lesson was broadly contextualized by the story students had read (about a character that sailed to different parts of the world). Second, the lesson was contextualized by a map of the world and a figurine students held and maneuvered as they constructed their responses (e.g., "Max sailed to Europe."). Third, students eventually took over the role of asking one another the general question (e.g., "Where did Max sail?"), and the respondent could construct his or her own answer, choosing the location on

the map (showing where they had Max sail) and uttering the corresponding response. While we do not know empirically the unique effects of each of the three meaning dimensions (story, map/figurine, and interactions), apart from the focus on form (*where* question and response), we hypothesize that these meaning dimensions contributed to language learning and explicit language teaching.

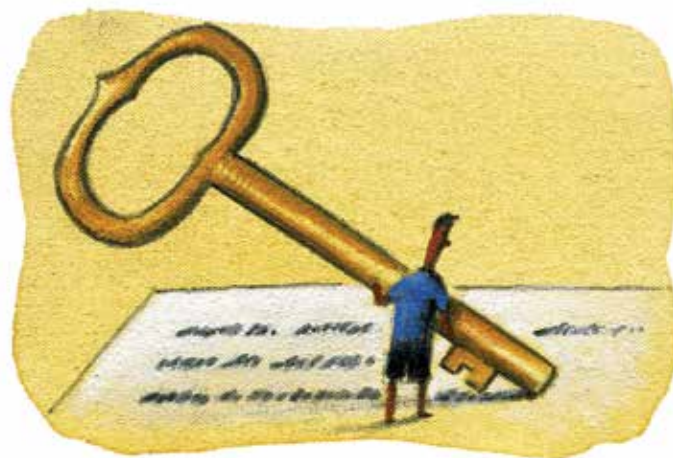### Group 4: Instructional guidelines: How should ELD be taught?

ELD instruction should maximize students' purposeful and ready use of English involving carefully planned interactive activities focused on specific language objectives. ELD instruction should

> Activities that *effectively* mix ELs and more-proficient ELs or native English speakers typically involve carefully structured tasks that strongly encourage productive interaction.

also provide students with corrective feedback that is nonthreatening and comprehensible, and encourage students to use strategies that help them progress as language learners.

10. ELD instruction should be planned and delivered with specific language objectives in mind.

The use of instructional objectives is often considered a centerpiece of effective instruction (although not necessarily by everyone[68]). Good objectives function as starting points and rudders to help keep lessons and activities focused and heading toward productive ends.[69] Instructional objectives enhance learning outcomes "to the degree to which objectives, teaching, and assessment are coordinated with one another."[70]

What we do not know empirically is the degree to which what seems to be generally true for other academic subjects also holds true for ELD instruction. However, we would like to elaborate on a potential connection between the more general research on instructional objectives and the evidence on explicit versus implicit second-language instruction reported earlier.[71] A subset of the studies analyzed in that synthesis included direct contrasts between treatments that specifically focused students' attention on the targeted language form and comparison conditions that involved simple exposure to or experience with the same language form. Such comparisons showed that explicit instruction focusing student attention on the targeted language form can substantially increase the success of such lessons. It is quite possible that formulating clear language objectives would support teachers'

efforts to plan and deliver instruction that effectively directs students' attention to the targeted language form. Thus, our hypothesis is that instructional objectives will be as useful for ELD instruction as they are for other types of academic instruction.[72]

11. Use of English during ELD instruction should be maximized; the primary language should be used strategically.

This guideline does not negate the fact that many studies have shown the advantages of maintenance and development of English learners' home languages, in particular the benefit to English literacy of teaching ELs literacy skills in their primary language (see "Unlocking the Research on English Learners," which begins on page 4 of this issue). We do not know with certainty, however, the impact that use of the primary language during ELD instruc-

tion will have on oral English language acquisition. In general, the evidence suggests that students' language choices tend to align with the dominant language of instruction. For example, one study[73] investigated the language choices of Spanish-speaking ELs in bilingual preschool classes. In classes where teachers tended to use more English for instruction, ELs tended to use more English with their peers. In classes where teachers tended to use more Spanish, learners tended to use more Spanish. A follow-up study[74] reported language-use data for first-grade Mexican American ELs, half of whom were enrolled in "English" classes, and half of whom were enrolled in Spanish bilingual classes. In the English classes, ELs used English during peer interactions most of the time. English learners in the bilingual classes used Spanish most of the time. Among second-grade English learners in Spanish bilingual programs where at least most instruction was delivered in Spanish, two studies[75] found that ELs were more likely to use Spanish during peer interactions. One of these studies[76] found students using Spanish over English by a ratio of 6 to 1. Finally, among fourth-grade English learners who had participated in Spanish bilingual classrooms through grade 3 and were then placed in an "English-only" class, a study[77] found a substantial increase from the beginning to the end of the year in students' use of English in their classroom interactions (53 percent to 83 percent).

Based on these studies, we conclude the following: If a practical goal of ELD instruction is increased use of English, that goal will be served best by instruction delivered and tasks carried out

primarily in English. However, we can imagine using the primary language in a limited but strategic manner during ELD instruction to ensure that students understand task directions, pay attention to cognates, and master language learning and metacognitive strategies.

12. ELD instruction should include interactive activities among students, but they must be carefully planned and carried out. If interactive activities are to benefit ELs, careful consideration must be given to the following factors:

- The design of the tasks in which students engage;
- The training or preparation of the more-proficient English speakers with whom the ELs interact; and
- The language proficiency of the ELs themselves.[78]

Without attention to these factors, interactive activities tend not to yield language-learning opportunities at all.[79] For example, in a study of cooperative learning groups comprised of grade 6 ELs and native English speakers, researchers found that paper-and-pencil tasks designed to spur interaction actually minimized interaction and language-learning opportunities.[80] ELs and non-ELs tended to cut short their interactions in order to complete assigned paper-and-pencil tasks in the allotted time: "Just write that down. Who cares? Let's finish up." Other researchers[81] drew a similar conclusion based on their review of EL studies that focused on reading outcomes: interactive activities that *effectively* mix ELs and more-proficient ELs or native English speakers typically involve carefully structured tasks that required or at least strongly encouraged productive interaction.

This guideline regarding interactive activities is supported by

English Language Development Guidelines

Group 1: Global policy guidelines: What should state, district, and school policy commit to for ELD instruction?

1. Providing ELD instruction is better than not providing it. (*Relatively strong supporting evidence from EL research*)
2. ELD instruction should continue at least until ELs attain advanced English language ability. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
3. The likelihood of establishing and sustaining an effective ELD instructional program increases when schools and districts make it a priority. (*Applicable to ELD but grounded in non-EL or non-ELD research*)

Group 2: Organizational guidelines: How should ELD instruction be organized in school?

4. A separate, daily block of time should be devoted to ELD instruction. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
5. English learners should be carefully grouped by language proficiency for ELD instruction, but they should not be segregated by language proficiency throughout the rest of the day. (*Applicable to ELD but grounded in non-EL or non-ELD research*)

Group 3: Curricular focus guidelines: What should be taught during ELD instruction?

6. ELD instruction should explicitly teach forms of English (e.g., vocabulary, syntax, morphology, functions, and conventions). (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
7. ELD instruction should emphasize academic language as well as conversational language. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
8. ELD instruction should incorporate reading and writing, but should emphasize listening and speaking. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
9. ELD instruction should integrate meaning and communication to support explicit teaching of language. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)

Group 4: Instructional guidelines: How should ELD be taught?

10. ELD instruction should be planned and delivered with specific language objectives in mind. (*Applicable to ELD but grounded in non-EL or non-ELD research*)
11. Use of English during ELD instruction should be maximized; the primary language should be used strategically. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
12. ELD instruction should include interactive activities among students, but they must be carefully planned and carried out. (*Relatively strong supporting evidence from EL research*)
13. ELD instruction should provide

students with corrective feedback on form. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)
14. Teachers should attend to communication and language-learning strategies and incorporate them into ELD instruction. (*Based on hypotheses emerging from recent EL research*)*

–W.S., C.G., and D.M.

*For a more complete discussion of the strength of the evidence for each of the 14 guidelines based on population, outcomes, and replication, see William Saunders and Claude Goldenberg's chapter, "Research to Guide English Language Development Instruction," in *Improving Education for English Learners: Research-Based Approaches*, http://bit.ly/10Kabqd.

research on older second-language learners. A meta-analysis[82] found that treatments with carefully constructed interactive tasks produced a significant and substantial effect on language-learning outcomes. It examined two critical features of interactive tasks: essentialness and output. Essentialness has to do with the extent to which the targeted language form is essential to the task the group is trying to complete: Does successful completion of the task *require*, or is it at least *facilitated by*, correct oral comprehension or production of the meaning of certain target words (e.g., modes of transportation: cars, trucks, trains, etc.) or language constructions (e.g., if-then, before-after)? Learning outcomes were stronger when the language forms or rules were essential for successful completion of a group task. A second analysis with the same studies focused on interactive tasks that required attempts

ELD teachers should not hesitate in providing corrective feedback. The central issue is how to do it so that students understand it as part of language learning rather than a negative evaluation.

to actually produce the language form, for example, tasks that required students to produce oral utterances using the target words, such as modes of transportation, or the target construction, such as an if-then construction. Interactive tasks that required learners to attempt to produce the language form more consistently yielded stronger effects on both immediate and delayed posttests than tasks that did not require learners to produce the language form. Another review[83] found similar results based on studies involving students ages 7 to 14: to be effective in supporting language development, interactive tasks need to be designed so that learners must *use* specified language forms in order to communicate successfully.

13. ELD instruction should provide students with corrective feedback on form.

Providing ELs with feedback on form is not a matter of whether to do it but how best to do it. During ELD instruction wherein the primary objective is studying and learning language, corrective feedback can be beneficial. A meta-analysis[84] that examined the effects of corrective feedback specifically on grammar included studies with a mixture of foreign-language, second-language, and English-as-a-second-language contexts, some of which were conducted in classrooms and some conducted under laboratory conditions. Despite several limitations, all of the studies involved a treatment group that received some form of grammar-focused corrective feedback, a comparison group that did not receive corrective feedback, and a measure of language learning. In all of the

studies, the treatment group outperformed the comparison group, and in two-thirds of the studies, the effects were large.

Another review[85] examined the effects of implicit and explicit forms of corrective feedback: recasts versus prompts. When teachers *recast* a student's utterance, they rearticulate what the student was trying to say with an utterance that includes corrections of one or more errors the student made. For example, if a student says, "My brown cat more big than my white," the teacher would say, "Oh, you mean your brown cat *is bigger* than your white *one*?" In contrast, *prompts* explicitly draw a student's attention to an error and encourage or require the student to attempt to repair (linguistics-speak for "to correct") the utterance. So in the previous example, the teacher would say something like, "Oh, your brown cat is bigger than your white one. Can you say it that way?"

And if the student hesitates, the teacher might help get him or her started (e.g., "My... brown...") and try to have the student formulate as much of the utterance as possible. All of the studies found positive effects for both recasts and prompts but with stronger effects for prompts.

The same review[86] also provides an analysis of how feedback given through more- and less-explicit forms might function differently depending on teachers' relative emphasis on form versus meaning. Based on a review of studies that looked at recasts and prompts in French and Japanese immersion classes,[87] it concludes that the general classroom orientation influences the potential benefits of either recasts or prompts. In form-focused classrooms where teachers spend some time engaging students in oral drills and repetition of correct forms, the more subtle or implicit recast can serve as meaningful feedback, yielding student repairs, because the students are used to attending to form and repetition of teacher utterances. Recasts are less effective in meaning-oriented classrooms where students are more accustomed to attending to communication and less likely to attend to corrections embedded in teacher utterances. In meaning-oriented classrooms, prompts may be more effective because they explicitly mark the need for the repair of an utterance and therefore purposefully redirect students' attention, at least momentarily, away from meaning to the language itself.

In sum, feedback should not be taken for granted. Where and when implicit feedback, such as recasts, seem to be relevant, ELD teachers will want to help students recognize them and under-

stand their function, most likely as a broader orientation to the instruction block. ELD teachers should provide similar orientation to interactional activities and lessons that involve explicit feedback, so as to alert students to the fact that interactions will be momentarily interrupted to give students feedback intended to help them refine their language use. Most important, the evidence suggests that ELD teachers should not avoid or hesitate in providing corrective feedback. Rather, the central issue is how to do it effectively so that students respond to it, benefit from it, and understand it as a productive part of language learning rather than a negative evaluation of *their* language learning.

14. Teachers should attend to communication and language-learning strategies and incorporate them into ELD instruction.
Two researchers[88] found that more-proficient ELs demonstrate a wider repertoire of language-learning strategies than less-proficient English learners. These strategies appear to emerge in the same order—from less to more sophisticated—and are correlated with levels of language proficiency. Second-language learners first use and rely most heavily on fairly simple strategies, such as repetition and memorization. As they learn words and phrases, they will repeat them upon hearing them (e.g., the teacher says "only," and the students repeat "only" to themselves), and they will practice and sometimes produce an entire group of related words they are learning to memorize (e.g., Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, etc.). As they progress to the middle levels of language development, English learners begin to use more interactive strategies. For example, they are more apt to talk to themselves ("I'll put this here, and this…"), insert themselves into conversations with verbal attention-getters ("I know…" or "I have one…" or "It was me…"), and elaborate on topics ("My mom and dad took me to…"). Finally, at more advanced levels, ELs use language- and communication-monitoring strategies in order to maintain and, as needed, repair communication with others, including self-correction ("I need some pencil—a pencil."), appeals for assistance ("How do you say…?"), and requests for clarification ("Decorate? What does decorate mean?").

In addition to the relevance of these findings for designing instructional strategies, in more general terms we view them as important information for ELD teachers. As students develop increasing proficiency, their capacity to use English increases, but so does their strategy use, which seems to undergo significant qualitative changes: from heavy reliance on receptive strategies to increased use of interactive strategies and eventually to more sophisticated, metacognitive communication-monitoring strategies.

Reviewing the literature on language-learning strategies, one researcher wrote:[89]

> Taken together, these studies identified the good language learner as one who is a mentally active learner, monitors language comprehension and production, practices communicating in the language, makes use of prior linguistic and general knowledge, uses various memorization techniques, and asks questions for clarification.

One study[90] found that explicit instruction on how to use strategies effectively, especially metacognitive strategies, might be beneficial for ELs' oral language development. Several other stud-

ies have shown positive effects of teaching or prompting listening comprehension strategies to English learners.[91] Teachers may need to use students' primary language (when they can) to teach strategies for students at lower levels of second-language proficiency.[92]

Our experience in schools suggests that attention to ELD instruction is growing, and that important efforts are underway to develop effective ELD programs for both elementary and secondary school students. Attention to the matter of academic language proficiency is also increasing.[93] It is imperative to complement such efforts and interest with careful research and evaluation. Clearly, no one guideline will be sufficient to help ELs gain access to high-level,

> ELD program development must be complemented by careful research and evaluation. Strong opinion too often trumps careful weighing of evidence.

mainstream academic curriculum. Instead, we must not only test individual components and guidelines, we must also construct comprehensive ELD programs and test the proposition that they help students acquire high levels of English language proficiency as rapidly as possible, regardless of whether they are in bilingual or English-only programs. From our experience, strong opinion too often trumps careful weighing of evidence in what remains a volatile and politically charged field.   □

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