Open any book, talk with any district administrator, or read any newspaper about the increasing number of students who speak languages in addition to English, and you will become increasingly aware that this growing demographic of young people in our country is seen as a “problem.” We understand the sense of urgency that educators feel in wanting to ensure that their emergent bilingual students learn to read, write, and thrive across social and academic contexts. We also know that very few classroom teachers receive any preparation or professional development in order to meet the needs of their emergent bilingual students. In this issue of *Language Arts* and in these professional book reviews, you will find resources that view students’ languages as rich and vital resources in a global world. And, as a group of passionate educators who teach, study, and learn with and from multilingual students, we are delighted to share our reviews of four professional books. Each of these books will extend and elevate your teaching in order to create language-rich, multimodal, and meaning-centered curriculum for your English learners.

**Focus on Literacy**


While you could read *Focus on Literacy* by yourself, the book’s structure and content call for conversation.

The book poses questions at the beginning of each chapter, making it useful for classes or study groups, as well as a conversation over coffee with a colleague. What I love about this book is how Fu and Matoush define, explain, illustrate, and highlight key concepts in creating rich literacy classrooms for the 21st century. The authors propose a “language as thinking” (p. 14) orientation to language learning:

Honoring the dignity of students’ sociocultural knowledge and experience implies consciously leading students to explore communication tools with the purpose of enabling them to express their full humanity as they see fit. It challenges the hegemonies associated with the dominance of English by informing students of their communicative choices while empowering them with the knowledge that they can craft messages that not only reflect who they are, but shape who they are becoming. (p. 14)

Throughout the book, language as thinking frames the theoretical orientation to teaching practices and serves as an analytical tool for evaluating traditional orientations to language instruction in both English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL) classrooms. Through classroom vignettes and research studies, the authors emphasize that language and literacy instruction for students learning English is too often focused on word- and surface-level features of text and communication instead of on meaning-centered engagements. The classroom vignettes are especially effective in helping readers clearly discern how such theories of literacy learning come to life in daily classroom practices. As I read, I found I wanted to look at the transcripts with teaching colleagues.

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and then collect our own transcripts in order to determine where our classroom practices may fall in relationship to teaching for communicative competence. The authors are sure to point out that they do not advocate teaching without regard for skills, but instead want students to learn literacy in meaningful contexts where such skills are embedded in language-rich, meaning-centered, authentic learning.

Focus on Literacy contains a rich and useful review of recent literature related to teaching L2 literacy learners. Each study demonstrates that when L2 learners are engaged in real reading, writing, and meaning making across sign systems (music, art, drama, speaking), they experience more academic success, develop positive literate identities, and embrace multiple languages as an integral part of their identities. As Fu and Matoush emphasize:

A language-as-thinking classroom leads to empowerment by helping L2 learners understand that reading and writing are authentic social activities that can be done mindfully, not simply contrived school-based means to test-driven ends and irrevocably tied to the social practices or ways of thinking of native speakers. (p. 41)

For many EFL and ESL educators, language-as-thinking will provide a new framework for pondering how language learners develop literacy and second languages. And for classroom teachers from early childhood to high school, Focus on Literacy offers examples of powerful classroom practices that model language-as-thinking. Fu and Matoush debunk 12 myths about language learning and its relationship to literacy development that will resonate with most readers. For example, the first myth, “Students are not able to engage in meaningful reading and writing until they gain a good command of language and literacy skills,” is as pervasive today as it was when I first started teaching 20 years ago. Yet, the authors provide brief explanations that help readers understand what research indicates about language learning and literacy development. These explanations could serve as important talking points to share with colleagues, curriculum specialists, and community members.

This book will expand readers’ knowledge base, whether they are experienced EFL and ESL teachers or mainstream classroom teachers seeking to more effectively teach their emergent bilingual learners as they become literate citizens. (TTL)


As the number of English learners entering schools across the nation continues to rise, many educators are struggling to grasp the subtleties of second language acquisition and understand how students’ conversational and academic language proficiencies develop. Teachers are searching for not only theoretically sound, research-based instructional strategies to meet English learners’ needs, they are also looking for practical, logistical ways to put these ideas into place. In other words, teachers want to know how to make research-based strategies work in their real-life, day-to-day classrooms. In her book, Supporting English Learners in the Reading Workshop, Lindsay Moses offers step-by-step, real-world ideas for implementing units of study during the reading workshop and outlines specific ways to differentiate instruction based on learners’ varying stages of language proficiency.

The author reminds educators that one of the first steps in supporting students “who are fortunate enough to speak another language other than English” (p. 2) is to view bilingualism and biliteracy as assets rather than deficits. English learners bring a wide range of resources from their home environments that can help support what they are learning at school. Moses outlines several essential components that are critical to effective instruction, such as building classroom
communities in which students feel safe to express ideas in the language of their choice; providing opportunities for learners to choose their own texts, topics, and types of responses; and encouraging students to engage in meaningful communications throughout the school day to help develop both their conversational and academic proficiency.

Moses explains the basic elements of the reading workshop—teacher-guided lessons or mini-lessons, independent reading, small-group instruction, sharing, and conferring—and answers some of the questions most frequently asked by teachers, such as “How do I fit it all in?” Furthermore, she walks the reader through each component by providing planning guides for the primary and intermediate levels in clear, easy-to-understand formats that focus on challenging English learners with both content objectives and language objectives.

Veteran and beginning teachers alike will appreciate the way Moses details how she implements thematic units of study, how she outlines whole-group anchor lessons to move students toward a deeper understanding of and purposeful interaction with literature, and how she illustrates ways to carry out small-group instruction and word work in any classroom. Moses also dispels the myth that the reading workshop does not include whole-group instruction, and she includes examples of how whole-group teaching should be incorporated into the reading workshop. In addition, within each chapter, Moses discusses the importance of using formative and summative assessment data to drive instruction, even dedicating an entire chapter to building time for reflection and sharing into the daily lessons—for both the students and the teacher.

In order to help English learners find success and reach their potential, teachers must do a better job of creating classroom communities that acknowledge and appreciate the growing diversity in this country. They must build strong frameworks within their classrooms that provide English language learners with literacy-rich experiences, expose them to content on their grade level, and make content comprehensible to them. Supporting English Learners in the Reading Workshop will help every novice and every experienced educator to do just that. It is a resource all teachers will want to read and keep handy. (LSS)

**English Language Learners and the New Standards:**

**Developing Language, Content Knowledge, and Analytical Practices in the Classroom**


English Language Learners (ELLs) are an extraordinary group of students, and their numbers increase in US classrooms every year. In the midst of a growing ELL student population, educators are under pressure to implement questionable college- and career-readiness standards as a response to the growing expectations for productive and successful citizens in the 21st century. The authors of this book call for a transformation of the educational practices used with ELLs: changing language learning from an individual, linear process that occurs in separate classes to a social, developmental process that allows ELLs to engage in integrated instruction.

The authors emphasize authentic, meaningful instruction as the goal for teachers of English Language Learners. Through the use of vignettes, readers are introduced to real-life classrooms, students, and teachers as the authors analyze each scenario through the lens of their stated tenets of effective instruction for ELLs. One tenet is the idea of apprenticeship. Students learn target skills in a social context as teachers model appropriate language and structure in content instruction. In this environment, the teacher encourages the students to use strategies such as creating their own questions, highlighting key text, and using their
first language(s) to support English acquisition. Teachers can heterogeneously group students by different language proficiencies—where students at different English levels can assist each other with language development—thus providing opportunities for language growth. A community of practice is established through routines, norms, and structures in which students take risks in their learning and support each other with feedback. Another tenet of effective instruction is the integration of language and content. There are no language drills where skills are practiced in isolation; the emphasis in every activity is on comprehension and communication in the context of a meaningful activity to strengthen students’ conceptual, linguistic, and analytical knowledge.

In another vignette, students use language to create questions, make connections to ideas, and collaborate with each other in a science unit. The authors describe the pedagogical shifts in this real-life scenario—such as moving away from passive language learning to language as action, or from isolated lessons to teaching through thematic lessons—and delve into other practices like scaffolding, multimodal activities, and formative assessments. Teaching language as patterned and purposeful gives language learners a sense of orientation, where they can be in charge of their learning. Legitimacy for English Language Learners is critical, the authors explain, as educational practices establish the belief that all language learners will succeed with their English language acquisition. These pedagogical shifts create that successful environment for all learners.

Focusing next on theory, the authors explore two opposing vignettes, explaining how teacher practices reflect theories of second language acquisition, learning, learners, and teaching. Theories reflect beliefs about language acquisition, addressing such critical questions as the effect of the first language on the second language or the pitfalls in seeing language acquisition as a process of memorization and repetition. Language theory is further deepened through the discussion of ideas such as competencies and functionality, such as when a person requests information or gives praise. The authors discuss other theories as well, but they make a consistent and global point: Reflect carefully on all relevant theories and be purposeful in applying them to your teaching practices: “Teachers receive too much ‘strategy’ training with little or no reflection of reasons, purposes, moments, and places in lessons where these strategies may be productive” (p. 84).

Heritage, Walqui, and Linquanti claim that formative assessment is the critical strategy in what they call contingent pedagogy. As part of their community of practice, teachers need to engage in constant formative assessment to guide second language learning acquisition for their students. Some types of formative assessment include sharing learning goals and success criteria with students, classroom talk as evidence, using evidence to make pedagogical responses, giving feedback to move learning forward, and activating students as resources for one another through peer assessment. These methods should be congruent with ideas about learning as a social act, using evidence in the classroom to scaffold, and with the goal of integrating ongoing teaching for the content, linguistic, and analytical development of ELLs.

The authors also address summative assessment, where ELL placement and advancement are based on results from district, state, and federal evaluations. Unfortunately, there is a disparity between these measures, as well as inconsistency and non-comparable definitions of ELLs within reported achievement groups. This leads to misinformed interpretations of ELL student achievement, thereby often under-representing growth and success. Such misaligned assessments and interpretations can lead to inequitable academic opportunities for ELLs. The authors discuss reform in ELL assessment and how observational and evaluative protocols can assess receptive and productive language use, resulting in improved engagement with grade-level content practices and more frequent achievement of social/occupational goals. The authors also urge...
that instruction and assessment practices reflect language-rich 21st century skills, such as complex interpersonal communication, collaboration, and conflict resolution.

Teachers and district administrators should see themselves as key actors in developing, shaping, evaluating, improving, and/or replacing policies regarding educational practices for ELLs. Many policies place teachers in positions of low autonomy and dichotomous teaching practices, leaving them at the mercy of external controls. The authors of this book encourage making such improvements at a more local level, utilizing professional capital to make instructional decisions that will result in academic and linguistic success for every student. *English Language Learners and the New Standards* is a practical resource for guiding educators into the next years and providing them with tools to support the English Language Learners in their classrooms. (ELZ)

In this professional text, Lesaux and Harris outline how educators can deepen comprehension and learning through facilitating English Learners’ (ELs) use of academic registers. The book is grounded in educational statistics and knowledge about the discouraging achievements of English Learners in US schools; they also combat the common misunderstanding that every EL is a newcomer. Lesaux and Harris support their legitimate claims without allowing a deficit perspective to take hold of their work. They tell us, “The two largest and fastest growing subpopulations of US ELs are students who immigrated before kindergarten and US-born children of immigrants (Capps et al., 2005)—they are not newcomers, enrolling as older children and adolescents” (p. 2). They remind teachers that the ELs our schools are serving most frequently began their education in the United States, have not qualified for services, and have exited ESL programs without continued language support. The authors use these remarks to awaken the educational community to the task of advocating for the learners who are in need of continued language support in the elementary grades; they emphasize and believe that “building up academic vocabulary and conceptual knowledge [which] holds huge promise” (p. 13).

Lesaux and Harris make the case for redesigning our model of teaching literacy with both word reading and language development in mind using a third-grade classroom setting throughout the book. Ms. Parkin’s room represents the many classrooms with children from an array of linguistically diverse backgrounds. Javier, a student in the class, summarizes how a seabird catches its prey with the words from the text. Although he offers a surface-level response during the guided-reading discussion, Ms. Parkin is attuned to Javier’s misconception by his interpretation of the lifted phrase “reaches the surface.” Lesaux and Harris use the backdrop of this classroom to show how spending more time in developing oral and written language skills can be achieved by considering the language competencies of read-alouds. Moreover, they call for educators to consider how language demands differ in various texts such as leveled readers and trade books. As a result, we come to learn the importance of intentionality in teaching as demonstrated through vignettes in three classrooms focused on academic language—kindergarten, third grade, and sixth grade.

Teachers are offered a brief overview of the relationship between oral language and academic language in Chapter 2; however, they receive a guided instructional approach or outline to instructional planning for ELs in Chapter 3. The authors contend that three principles are needed in
criteria on selecting big ideas and their associated touchstone text to making the case for studying a small set of words in a knowledge-building classroom. Readers will appreciate the inclusion of highlighted words from a touchstone text on zoos and a nonfiction text index as ways to identify a pool of potential words and their usefulness. Chapter 7 provides a clear way to build students’ word-learning strategies with a specific focus on building students’ morphological awareness skills, demonstrating with snapshots from Ms. Parkin’s class. The final chapter guides teachers in consolidating the learning opportunities previously provided through the cycle by describing the process of how English learners can create language production projects.

Overall, Lesaux and Harris create a pathway to cultivating knowledge and building language. They intentionally plan, arrange, and provide built-in supports to scaffold readers through the cycle of a knowledge-building classroom. Undoubtedly, their work will encourage educators in supporting students’ language development at all levels. (EA)

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