Research Clips on English Language Learners

Research Clips are short research-based responses to questions about practice. For more detailed explanations and a list of related research, see English Language Learners: A Policy Research Brief. www.ncte.org/library/files/Publications/Newspaper/Chron0308PolicyBrief.pdf

Accounting for English Language Learner Students and a Global and Multilingual World
What are some major concerns surrounding English language learner education?

- Our U.S. student populations are drastically shifting as a result of a newly-global, diverse, and changing world. Our classrooms reflect these changes and demand a response.
  - English language learners (ELLs) are the fastest growing segment of the student population.¹
  - ELL students are increasingly present in all US states.²
  - ELLs sometimes struggle academically.³
  - These numbers lead to reports about an emerging and underserved population of students who are ELLs.

Changing Ideas about English Language Learner Education
What are some misconceptions we can change about English language learners?

- ELLs are often perceived and placed as students with learning disabilities. This designation may or may not be accurate; further, research suggests that ELLs with disabilities can learn, and early intervention can prevent academic failure. Inclusive environments that provide challenging rather than remedial instruction will be most effective.⁴
- A variety of factors affect student language acquisition, and language acquisition is not a simple, quick, or once-and-for-all process, nor is it the same process for all students. Because English language learning is a recursive and multifaceted process, educators should integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills into instruction from the start.⁵
- Instructional support for ELLs benefits not just them, but all students. Many cognitive aspects of reading are common to both native speakers of English and ESL learners, though research shows that teachers should pay additional attention to background knowledge, interaction, and word use with ELLs.⁶

Teacher Strategies for English Language Learners
What strategies can teachers use to support English language learners in the classroom?

- Present ELLs with challenging curricular content.⁷
- Set high expectations for ELLs.⁸
- Use technology effectively.⁹
- Recognize sociocultural factors.¹⁰
- Position native languages and home environments as resources.¹¹
- Teach ELLs in grades K-8 the basics of academic literacy, such as those recommended by models like Five Standards for Effective Pedagogy, Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA), and Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP).¹², ¹³
Teach ELLs in secondary school, like their K-8 peers, to simultaneously develop their skill with academic English and learn content in a variety of disciplines. Recognize the difference between ELLs and under-prepared students in higher education.

**Support for Teachers**

What kinds of support for teachers can help them help ELL students?

- Professional development for teachers of English language learners in effective practices that build on home languages.
- Support for bilingual and dual immersion programs.

**Useful Links**

TESOL Bibliography on Compile
http://comppile.tamucc.edu/wiki/TESOLBibliography/Introduction

Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach
www.gwu.edu/~calla/

Census information on languages in the home
http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/GRTT

From the Center for Applied Linguistics: The SIOP Model of Sheltered Instruction
www.cal.org/siop

**NCTE Resources**

Research Policy Brief on English Language Learners

English Language Learners Pathways
www.ncte.org/pathways

*Language Learners in the English Classroom* (NCTE, 2007).
www.ncte.org/store

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9 Callahan, 2005.


