

**Sixth Edition**

# **Reading, Writing, and Learning in ESL**

**A Resource Book for Teaching  
K-12 English Learners**

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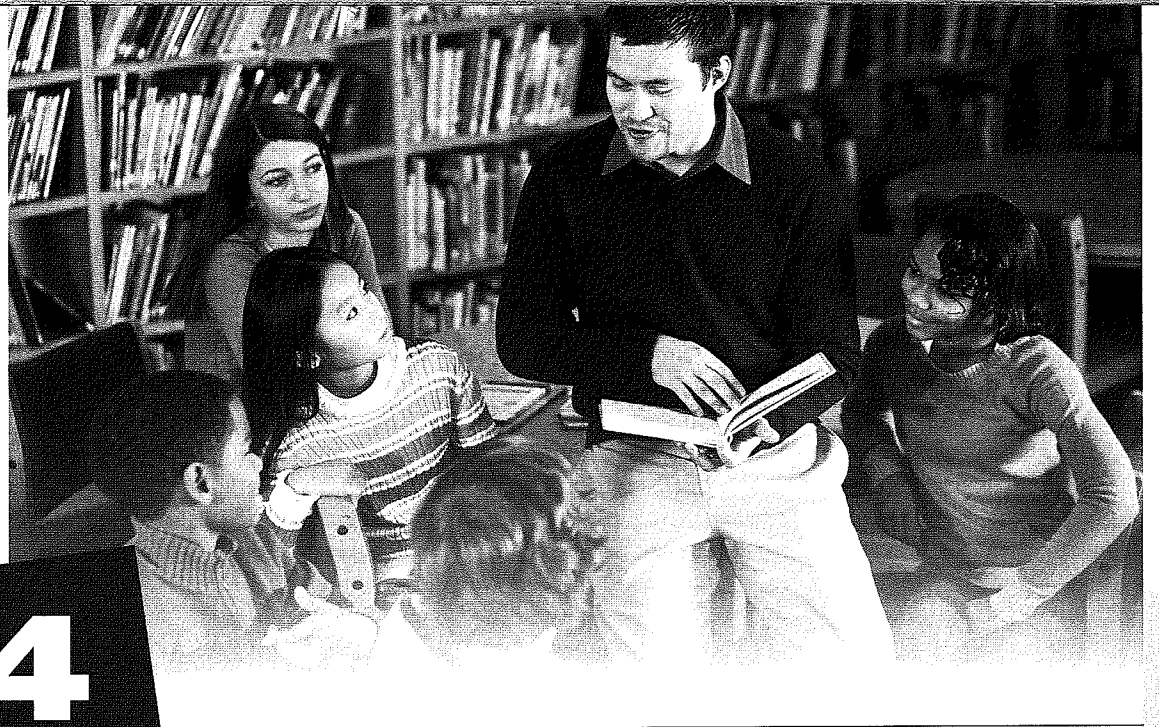
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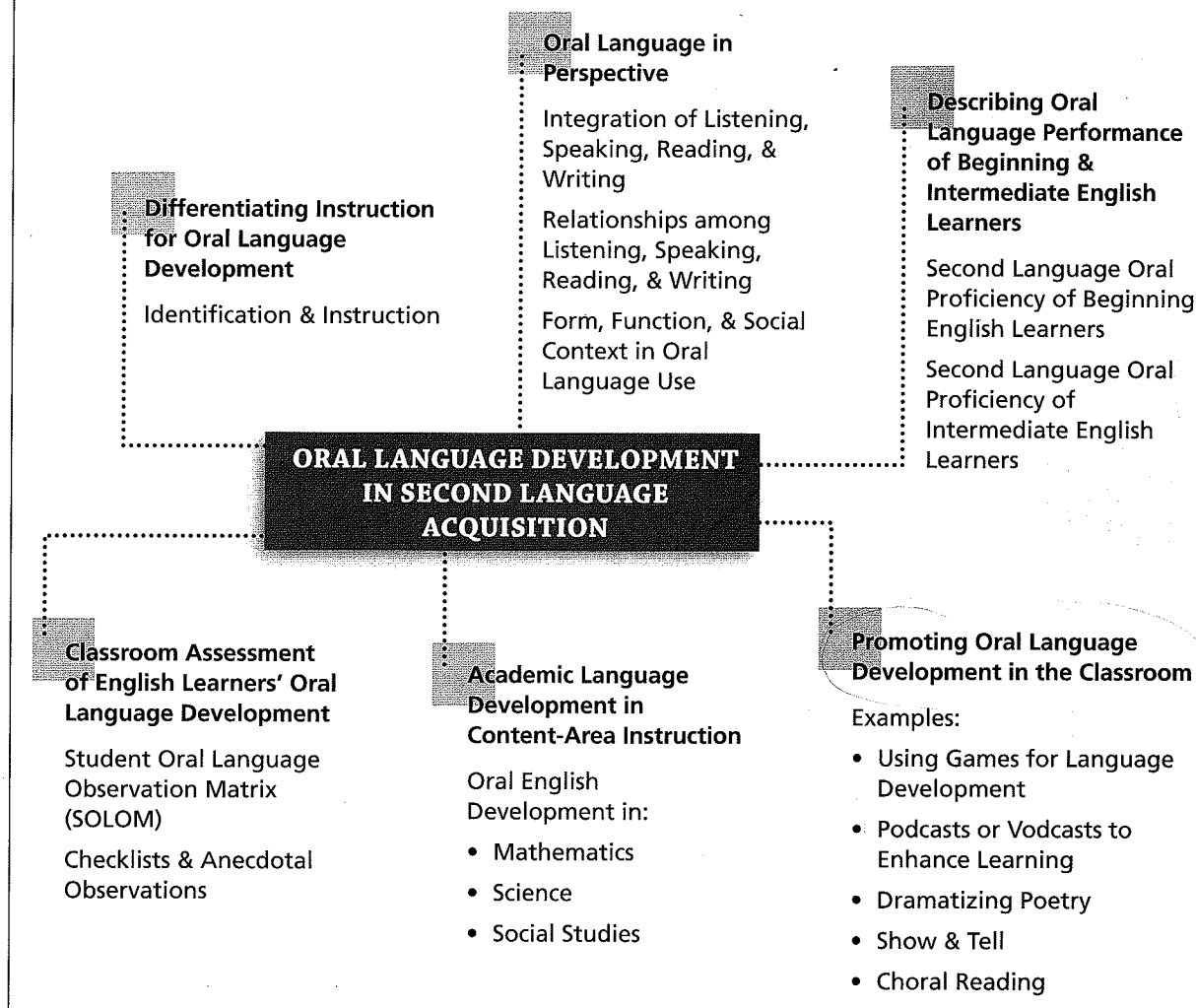
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## **Oral Language Development in Second Language Acquisition**

“*Conversation is the laboratory and workshop of the student.*”

—EMERSON

## Chapter Overview



In this chapter, we discuss oral language development and its relationship to literacy and academic development. We also provide suggestions for promoting and assessing oral language development in second language acquisition. The following questions are addressed in the chapter:

1. What are the relationships among listening, reading, speaking, and writing? How do these relationships inform classroom teachers?
2. How do language form, communicative function, and social context combine to affect students' oral language performance in the classroom?
3. What are some characteristics of beginning and intermediate levels of second language oral proficiency in English?

4. Which strategies and technology tools will assist beginning and intermediate students in developing oral language proficiency?
5. How can structured observation tools, checklists, and anecdotal observations be used to describe and document oral language performance and development?
6. How can we differentiate instruction to address English learner needs?

We look forward to visiting Lisa Garcia's third-grade classroom because her students are always so actively involved and because Lisa sees oral language as essential for all students. When we enter her room, we see children dancing and singing; we see them pantomiming snowflakes; we see them talking about books they have read or heard; we see them discussing the growth of the class bunny; and we see them preparing puppet shows. In addition, we know that when we enter the classroom, the children will expect us to be a part of the daily events. They often want to share their recent writing with us, or they will read or recite a pocket poem to us. In Lisa's class, children get recognition for reading a favorite poem to anyone who enters the class or for reading the poem to someone in the schoolyard at recess time. The children carry favorite poems in their pockets, and when they recite a poem to someone, that person signs the poem.

### Oral Language in Perspective

Walter Loban, a favorite professor of ours and a pioneer in researching oral language development of students from kindergarten through twelfth grade, used to say:

We listen a book a day,  
talk a book a week,  
read a book a month,  
and write a book a year.

(cited in Buckley, 1992)

With this saying, Loban highlighted the pervasiveness of oral language in our lives; it is so pervasive, in fact, that we easily take it for granted—until plagued with a case of laryngitis. For students learning English as a second language in school, oral language development plays a key role as well. When students are working or playing together, their conversations are based on concrete, here-and-now topics of current interest. As a result, opportunity abounds for them to negotiate meaning through requests for clarification, reference to objects at hand, and other face-to-face communication strategies. To optimize classroom oral language learning opportunities, we need to make time each day for students to talk to each other while working in a variety of situations, including paired reading, group research projects, group work at learning centers, brainstorming a writing topic, sharing news with the entire class, and just visiting quietly while carrying out

tasks. Although classroom oral language opportunities such as these may seem obvious to you, research indicates that teachers do from 65 to 95 percent of the talking in most classrooms (Lowry, 1980; Nunan, 2005). Language development should be vocal and visible in classrooms where talk is valued as a learning tool.

Task-directed talk, including teacher talk during instruction, is useful in and of itself for second language acquisition if sheltering techniques are used, as discussed in Chapter 3. Talk is also important for helping students clarify concepts and arrive at their own understandings. As academic content increases in complexity, the use of small- and large-group discussion plays a vital role in promoting students' conceptual understanding and learning. Consistent with the value we place on oral language interactions, we incorporate opportunities throughout this book for students to develop their own thinking through talking and responding as they read, write, and learn in English.

### **Integration of Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing**

What does it mean to integrate listening, speaking, reading, and writing? In natural, day-to-day experience, oral and written language uses are not kept separate and isolated from one another. Instead, they often occur together, integrated in specific communication events. For example, when you are reading the Sunday newspaper, you may comment on an article to your roommate or spouse, engendering a discussion about it. Such discussion may lead you to reread parts of the article to clarify questions that emerged in the discussion. If your parents were immigrants and spoke little English when you were a child, you may have had the experience of translating for them and helping them fill out forms at the doctor's office. In each of these real-life situations, oral and written language uses intermingle as people go about the business and pleasures of life, and the intermingling of oral and written language occurs in literate societies across ethnic and social class boundaries (Heath, 1983; Vásquez, 1991).

Listening, speaking, reading, and writing are used together in learning events in school at all grade levels, even though traditionally they were taught separately. (See Chapter 3 for more discussion.) In primary grades, for example, the teacher may read a picture book aloud, taking time along the way to let children orally predict what will happen next or to discuss the characters or plot. Older students may perform a play from a written script, engaging in lengthy discussion over the fine points of interpretation, with the final result being a dramatic oral performance of the play. When students write stories, they read what they write, ask others to read and comment on their writing, and perhaps read their writing aloud to celebrate its completion. In all these situations, a written text has been the subject of oral discussion and interpretation, demonstrating how oral and written languages become naturally interwoven during a particular communication event. In school, you enrich each school day when you give children opportunities to interweave oral and written language for functional, meaningful learning purposes.

### **Relationships among Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing**

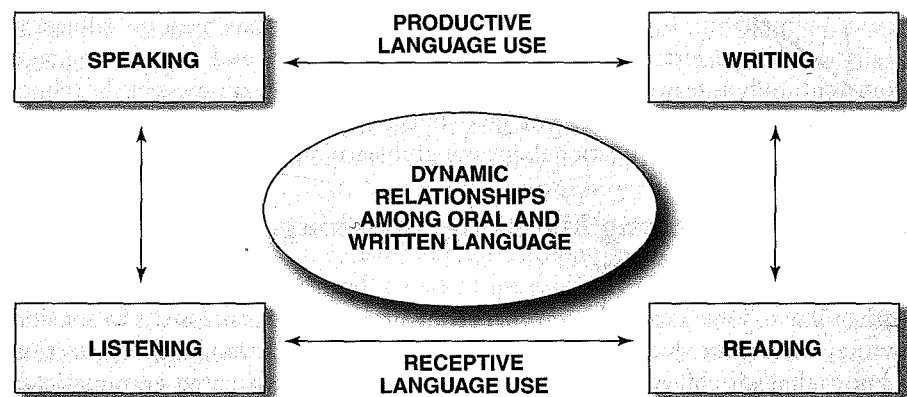
Another way to look at the integration of the four language processes is to consider how they interrelate during language development. In first language acquisition, we know that all children, barring severe abnormalities, become grammatically

competent speakers of the mother tongue by about age 5. Subsequent language development relates primarily to vocabulary acquisition and expansion of the functions for which language is used. Competence in reading and writing, on the other hand, is a much later development and one not universally achieved. Thus, oral language development occurs earlier and more fully than written language development in first language acquisition.

Various patterns emerge among students who are learning English as a second language in school. For young English learners with little literacy in the home language, basic oral language competence is likely to emerge earlier than competence in reading and writing (Fradd & McGee, 1994). For older students who know how to read in their first language, however, the pattern may be different. Some of these students may develop competence in written English earlier than oral English. In either case, a good deal of time is spent simultaneously developing both oral and written language abilities. We also know that English language learners do not need to be fully proficient in oral English before they start to read and write (Hudelson, 1984). Furthermore, second language knowledge can be developed from written and oral input, provided that the text is comprehensible to the language learner (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Krashen, 2004). The relationships among listening, speaking, reading, and writing during development, then, are complex relationships of mutual support. Practice in any one process contributes to the overall reservoir of second language knowledge, which is then available for other acts of listening, speaking, reading, or writing. For this reason, it is important to provide abundant exposure to functional, meaningful uses of both oral and written language for all learners.

Figure 4.1 illustrates the interrelationships among listening, reading, speaking, and writing. More specifically, listening and reading are receptive uses of language: Messages are received by ear or by eye, and meaning is reconstructed based partly on prior knowledge. Listening and reading are not passive processes, however. Listeners and readers must actively take the speaker's words and re-create the message to comprehend it. Thus, when you assist students with listening comprehension, you are assisting them with reading comprehension. Conversely, speaking and writing are productive uses of language: The speaker or writer must *create* the message for an audience. When you assist students with spoken

**FIGURE 4.1** Relationships among Written and Oral Language





composition, therefore, you are assisting them with written composition. Moreover, reading can be one of the most important ways to develop oral vocabulary, and writing facilitates learning how to compose in oral language. Thus, in day-to-day life, oral and written language are interwoven like threads in a tapestry, each supporting the other to create the whole picture (Boyle, 1979).

In summary, we have spent some time discussing the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing to emphasize the importance of creating learning opportunities that involve using all four interrelated language processes. We have described two general reasons for this recommendation. First, in the course of day-to-day living, people move back and forth from oral to written modes during communication because both serve essential functions. The same holds true for the kinds of communication that promote learning in the classroom. Thus, the integration of listening, speaking, reading, and writing is functionally appropriate. Second, practical use of each language process provides both specific development of that process and overall language development in English. As teachers, we want to develop all students' abilities to the fullest as listeners and speakers, readers, and writers.

### **Form, Function, and Social Context in Oral Language Use**

As you begin to focus on your students' oral language use, you need to take into account language forms, functions, and social contexts. As you begin to facilitate students' oral language competence, you will want to consider how social context affects choice of language form for a given language function or purpose. The social context consists of the social setting, the speakers, and the social and power relations among them. Language *forms* include choice of words, grammar, and pronunciation. Language *functions* are the communicative intentions or purposes of speakers' utterances (see Table 4.1). For example, consider a social setting consisting of parents, grandparents, and three teenage boys having dinner at home. One of the teenagers wants the salt, which is near his younger brother. He says, "Hey, gimme the salt, woudja?" If the salt were near his grandmother, he might say instead, "Grandma, can you pass me the salt?" He might even say "please." If this same family were having dinner at a formal banquet, the teenager might be a little more formal in his request of his brother, saying perhaps, "Could ya pass the salt over here please?" The teenager's choice of language form has varied according to formality of the social setting and his relationship with the person to whom he addressed his request. The social context plays an important role in communication, setting parameters, of formality or politeness, for example, that guide linguistic choices.

The social context of language use places different cognitive and social demands on speakers that may affect the quality of their oral language performance. The same thing can happen, though perhaps less obviously, in one's native language. Consider, for example, the difference between a casual chat with a friend about a movie you have just seen and a formal job interview in which six interviewers are seated around a boardroom table facing you. The two situations differ considerably in the extent to which you "watch your language" and attempt to be clear, precise, and grammatically correct. For English language learners, the more formal and cognitively demanding situation can trigger noticeably more errors in pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary than would generally occur in a less formal situation. This being the case, you can see why it is important to observe students in various social contexts or communication situations, formal and informal, to accurately assess their oral proficiency.

**TABLE 4.1** Language Functions and Analogous Classroom Experiences

<b>Functions</b>	<b>Classroom Experiences</b>
<i>Instrumental:</i> I want; language as a means of getting things, of satisfying needs	Child clarifying instructions from morning routines; asking for supplies in play store or kitchen; asking for book in class library
<i>Regulatory:</i> Do as I say; controlling the behavior, feelings, or attitudes of others	Developing pantomimes and role-playing routines with partners or in groups; determining steps for completing projects
<i>Interactional:</i> Me and you; social interaction, getting along with others	Working in cooperative and collaborative groups on projects, art activities, and play
<i>Personal:</i> Here I come; pride and awareness of self, expressions of individuality	Sharing and telling about oneself; dictating language experience stories to others; sharing personal experiences
<i>Heuristic:</i> Tell me why; seeking and testing knowledge	Asking the teachers and students how something works; explaining the ideas in a story or retelling a story
<i>Imaginative:</i> Let's pretend; making up stories and poems; creating new worlds	Using wordless books to create new stories; using pictures to create stories; using creative dramatics to act out original ideas
<i>Informative:</i> I've got something to tell you; communicating information, description, ideas	Sharing ideas about what should be studied in a project or theme cycle; explaining what happened during a school event or describing a favorite television show
<i>Divertive:</i> Enjoy this; jokes, puns, riddles, language play	Telling riddles and jokes during special time devoted to this purpose

As we discuss students' oral language proficiency, we will refer not only to language forms but also to language functions. Table 4.1 illustrates Halliday's **functional categories** (1985) for oral language use along with corresponding classroom examples. You can develop specific activities in your classroom to expand students' ability to use language to carry out a variety of communicative functions. For example, Halliday's interactional function deals with getting along with others, and it can be translated into cooperative group work in your classroom. Group work enhances students' growth in language, building on conversational skills they already possess, and easing adaptation to school routines. As teachers, we are charged with the task of developing students' abilities to use language effectively for heuristic (scientific discovery and problem solving) and informational functions. Thus, K-12 schooling serves to expand children's and young adults' repertoires in a variety of oral language functions.

While keeping in mind our philosophy concerning the integration of the four language processes serving a variety of communicative functions, we will spend the remainder of this chapter discussing English learners' oral language development. We begin with a discussion of oral language proficiency characteristics of beginning and intermediate English learners. Next, we provide descriptions of classroom activities that promote oral language development, followed by procedures for documenting oral language performance and development during classroom activities.

## Describing Oral Language Performance of Beginning and Intermediate English Learners

In this book, we offer instructional strategies for English learners who are not yet fully proficient in English. We assume that fully proficient English learners will be able to benefit from the same instructional program, provided you validate them personally and culturally in the educational process. Most of the reading, writing, and learning ideas in this book are appropriate or can be adapted for all students, not just beginning and intermediate English learners. Thus, you may use the strategies with fully proficient English learners and native English speakers as well, according to your judgment.

In keeping with our concern for English learners described as limited in English proficiency and to facilitate your use of this book, we have taken the larger category of limited English proficiency (LEP) and divided it into two subcategories of English learners: (1) beginning and (2) intermediate. We use these categories in this chapter in reference to oral proficiency and in subsequent chapters to describe second language reading and writing proficiency. We include non-English speakers in our beginner category because the strategies we suggest work as well for them as for children who have already begun to speak the new language. As you read on, bear in mind that these are broad, general guidelines, not levels set in stone. We designate activities as appropriate for beginning and intermediate English learners for your convenience. However, please keep in mind that no activity should be withheld from any particular student solely on the basis of perceived English language proficiency. It is all too easy to misjudge a child's language competence because language performance varies across situations and from week to week as a result of the dynamic and context-specific nature of language proficiency. Moreover, motivation tends to stretch a child's performance. Therefore, we recommend that you allow students the choice to take part in more difficult activities according to their interests and desires. You may be in for some pleasant surprises!

### Second Language Oral Proficiency of Beginning English Learners

The beginner phase of second language development starts immediately on exposure to the new language. Early on, the child may neither understand nor speak a word of English. Soon, however, language comprehension develops as a result of opportunities for social interaction with speakers of the new language and the

comprehensible input that is generated. Although it is important not to force beginners to speak, the fact is that shortly, within perhaps a week to a few months, most students will naturally begin to speak on their own (Terrell, 1981). At this point, their speech is likely to be limited to simple phrases and expressions that have highly functional communicative payoffs, such as "OK," "No," "Wanna play," "I wanna she go, too," and "I donno" (Wong Fillmore, 1983). As beginners develop, they are able to generate utterances according to simple grammatical rules, enabling them to carry out various tasks according to their own needs and purposes. The conversation in Example 4.1, described by Lily Wong Fillmore (1980), shows a young beginner's attempt to get an eraser back from her friend Cathy.

Kim-girl is at the table doing seatwork. Cathy, Sin Man, Suh Wah, and Chui-Wing are at the same table; they have been arguing over the possession of a pink eraser all morning. As you can see in the example, Kim-girl makes use of various formulaic expressions, such as "That's all," "Bye-bye," and "No way." In addition, in this conversation, she demonstrates her ability to use simple present tense grammar for statements and questions when she says, "Can I eraser? Can I hab color? Se want 'raser. This Edlyn gip me." Her pronunciation shows some influence from her native language, Korean, in the use of *se* for *she* and *gip* for *give*. As a beginner in English, Kim-girl is resourceful in using her rudimentary English knowledge to try to get her eraser back. She also takes the opportunity for pattern practice with her litany of "Gip me" sentences. With limited formal language knowledge in terms of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation, Kim-girl is effective in achieving her communicative goal: the return of the eraser.

#### ■ Example 4.1

##### Beginning-Level Second Language Development

**Cathy:** Gimme 'raser! [*Takes Kim-girl's eraser.*]

**Kim-Girl:** [*Looks up crankily. Turns to Lily Wong Fillmore and complains:*]

Can I eraser? Se took my 'raser. Se want 'raser.

This Edlyn gip me.

[*She grabs microphone that has been placed right in front of her and says into it:*]

Gip me 'raser, yah!

Gip me pencil, yah!

Gip me chopstick, no!

Gip me crayon, yah!

Can I hab color? No way!

That's all! Bye-bye!

**Source:** Lily Wong Fillmore, "Learning a Second Language: Chinese Children in the American Classroom," J. E. Alatis, ed., *Current Issues in Bilingual Education: Georgetown University Roundtable on Languages and Linguistics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1980), p. 323.

Your initial concern when a beginner first arrives in your classroom is to provide social-emotional support by assigning the new student to a home group and designating a buddy, preferably one who speaks the child's home language. The buddy accompanies the newcomer everywhere throughout the school day, including to the bathroom, cafeteria, and bus stop. Meanwhile, the home group assumes responsibility for the new child during routine classroom activities. Some teachers set up home groups of four to five students each at the beginning of the school year. These groups remain fairly stable throughout the year to create interpersonal support and cohesion. With such groups in place, much responsibility for caring for a new student may be transferred from the teacher to the home group. These assignments help meet the safety, security, and belonging needs of a new student and create the social interaction matrix from which language acquisition begins to grow.

At the beginner level, support for participation in lessons comes from three sources: the teacher, the other students, and the newcomers themselves. Early on, you may provide some tasks that do not require speech but rather invite a non-verbal participatory response. For example, if a group is working on a thematic project, the newcomer may be involved in drawing, painting, or coloring a mural with the assistance of the other group members. In this way, the child contributes actively to the group project, while interacting through concrete and context-embedded language. Drawing or painting a mural is actually a high-level cognitive activity. Information gleaned from the theme study must be synthesized and portrayed accurately and meaningfully. And so, art becomes a valid academic learning tool for English language learners, just as it can be for native English speakers. Working on the mural project can also promote language development



When English learners work and play with native English speakers, language learning opportunities occur naturally and often.

because active involvement in a low-risk, small-group activity means that a good deal of talk will go on, providing excellent input for language acquisition.

Similarly, you and the other students can make use of sheltering techniques, such as gestures, paraphrasing, and checking for understanding, to help make lessons and routine activities more understandable to the newcomer. Finally, you can make sure that small-group activities take place frequently, to create numerous opportunities for social interaction. With this kind of support, beginners will gradually advance toward the intermediate phase described next.

### **Second Language Oral Proficiency of Intermediate English Learners**

Intermediate English learners are able to understand and speak English in face-to-face interactions, and they are able to speak with minimal hesitation and relatively few misunderstandings. Nevertheless, because their grammatical abilities (syntax, semantics, phonology) are still developing, you may notice features in their speech that are not typical of standard English. For example, intermediate EL students may at times confuse *he* and *she*. They may not conjugate verbs conventionally, saying things like, "My friend, she like to read a lotta books," using *like* instead of *likes*.

Even though these speech differences may nag at you for correction, we recommend that you control the natural tendency to constantly correct students' grammar in the middle of a conversation. Instead, make a point of noticing how much the child can now do with the new language. Show interest by asking questions that focus on the activity at hand, encouraging the student to tell you more. Build in and model appropriate grammar and vocabulary as you respond, thereby providing input that is tailored to the student's immediate linguistic needs and interests. You may be surprised to find that with patient listening, your student is able to understand and discuss ideas at a fairly complex level. For example, intermediate students may be able to recall the details of a story, identify main ideas, predict what will come next, and perhaps summarize a plot. However, at this phase of development, students are likely to struggle to formulate their ideas in their new language, both orally and in writing. To get an idea of an intermediate English learner's oral language, take a look at how Teresa described the movie *Poltergeist* to us (Example 4.2). Teresa, a fifth-grader whose first language is Spanish, has been learning English since the third grade.

As you can see, Teresa is quite expressive in English and is able to provide a rather detailed account of the movie. She employs her developing vocabulary with a variety of grammatical rules, using both past and present tense forms. Furthermore, she is able to coordinate her linguistic knowledge without hesitation much of the time. The aspects of Teresa's speech that indicate her intermediate level of English language development consist primarily of (1) her unconventional verb use (e.g., "hand get out," "little girl sleep," "it look ugly"); (2) non-idiomatic expressions (e.g., "he see all the time a tree," "the little girl pass the television"); and (3) occasional groping for appropriate vocabulary items (e.g., "*sillón*, in like a chair" and variations of the word *scare*: scare, scared, scary).

During the intermediate phase of second language development, you can support students' participation in learning activities by continuing with the sheltering techniques and small-group collaboration discussed previously. In addition, now is the time to involve students in more linguistically demanding tasks. For one thing,

### ■ Example 4.2

#### Intermediate-Level Second Language Speaker

*Suzanne:* Was it scary?

*Teresa:* No, it wasn't scary. But, well . . . First it was scary but then the other one no. Because there was . . . First a little girl . . . There was a television and the father was sleeping in the . . . in a . . . *sillón*? in like a chair. And then the little girl pass the television and she said, "Right here!" Then . . . then a hand get out of the television and she said, "Ouch!" And then a little boy was sleeping and the little girl sleep here and the boy here and then he see all the time a tree and then . . . then . . . there was outside a tree . . . a tree. But it look ugly in the night. It look like a face . . . And then he was scary. Then he tell his father and his father said OK. Just count 1, 2, 3 to not escare. Then . . . then . . . the . . . he . . . the little girl and the little . . . the two brothers go in with the mother and her father because they're still escare.

Intermediate English language learners know sufficient English to be able to serve as the buddy of a newly arrived non-English speaker. In terms of classroom learning activities, the intermediate student will be able to hold a speaking part in a story dramatization or readers' theater, or any other more formal language activity that permits rehearsal. In addition, during this phase, students may enjoy participating in small-group discussions of stories, science experiments, and other activities.

As intermediate-level English language learners progress, they may appear able to use English with nearly as much facility as their native English-speaking counterparts. Their speech may be fluent, and you might find them responding with enthusiasm during whole-class and small-group discussion. Their reading and writing may be relatively fluent as well. At this point, it is important to continue both sheltering techniques and group collaboration. More advanced intermediate students are capable of understanding steady streams of verbal instruction, but you still need to accompany your words with charts, graphic organizers, concrete objects, and pictures to convey meaning. These efforts will enhance learning for all students. In addition, intermediate students can benefit from hearing the teacher use technical vocabulary, provided that it is introduced with concrete experiences and visual support, such as graphs and pictures that parallel your verbal explanations.

## Promoting Oral Language Development in the Classroom

The classroom is a natural environment for a large variety of oral language learning opportunities, and you will find that the following chapters build on and integrate this oral language foundation with writing and reading. As the teacher, you can organize your classroom in ways that encourage the two most important elements of oral language development: **social interaction** **comprehensible input**

and **comprehensible output**. Keep in mind that a predictable schedule helps students adjust to the classroom and provides easily acquired basic vocabulary with the repeated routines.

In addition to the basic routines of roll call, recess, snack, lunch, and dismissal, the use of routine instructional events also provides oral language learning opportunities. Some typical routine instructional events include circle time, journal time, literature study circles, process writing, projects, theme studies, and other lesson sequences in content areas such as math, science, and social studies. To the extent that these instructional events maintain the same structure while the content changes, they provide a familiar routine with repetition of familiar language that scaffolds student participation and learning (Boyle & Peregoy, 1991; Peregoy, 1991; Peregoy & Boyle, 1999a, 1999b). For example, a literature study circle has a small-group discussion format centered on one book. The format remains stable throughout the year, but the content—that is, the book being discussed—changes. Another stable feature of the literature study circle is the discussion of literary elements and the informal turn-taking procedures. Thus, students become familiar and comfortable with the literature study circle as an interactional format that supports their oral language use and development.

Whether you are engaging your students in literature study, process writing, or theme studies, it is always important to review your own instructional delivery to incorporate additional cues to convey meaning, especially nonverbal cues, such as dramatization, gesture, pictures, graphic organizers, and concrete objects. As a teacher-researcher, you can analyze and evaluate ways in which classroom activities and verbal/visual adaptations work with your English learners by keeping a daily log or by videotaping lessons for later analysis. Verbal strategies that help students understand your talk include paraphrasing, repeating key vocabulary in context, and summarizing main points. Social interaction can be promoted in the classroom by encouraging students to work in pairs and groups. These strategies for sheltering, scaffolding, and group work were described in detail in Chapter 3.

In addition to the oral language development opportunities available during managerial and instructional routines, there are a number of wonderful learning activities that showcase oral language use in ways that promote acquisition. Interestingly, many of these activities are based on the arts. This makes sense if you stop to consider that the arts employ nonverbal media of communication. When these media are combined with language use, natural scaffolding is provided for comprehension and production of oral language. The activities described in the following pages can be integrated into literature study, theme studies, and process writing, or they can take on a life of their own. Because they provide opportunities for negotiation of meaning through social interaction, they facilitate oral language development. Each activity can be easily adapted for beginning- or intermediate-level students. In most cases, we give examples of possible adaptations that make student participation easier or more difficult so that you may adjust the level to challenge your students appropriately.

### **Using Games for English Language Development**

In our teaching at the elementary, secondary, and college level, we have used games, such as simulation games, drama games, pronunciation games (Tatsuki, 1996), grammar games, story games, and writing games, to improve student learning and



to create an atmosphere of ease, creativity, and fun. We especially enjoy and recommend drama warm-up activities like those in Spolin (1963/1983) and described at the end of this chapter. We believe that any lesson that allows us to use a game improves student learning and attitude. Games create experiences with language and ideas, and "experience is the glue that makes learning stick." Throughout this book we give examples and recommend games for motivating, engaging, and getting feedback from students (Wisniewska, 1998). At the end of this chapter we recommend a classic book full of games for beginning, intermediate, and advanced English language learners (Wright, Betteridge, & Buckby, 2002). You can start with this classic book and easily adapt ideas for your own classes. For example, older students can make board games based on content they are studying. Younger students might create games based on the stories they are reading. Finally, with your guidance, students can make and play their own games based on a game, such as Monopoly (Yang, 1992). You won't be disappointed if you try games. One site offering fun games for learning is [www.englishclub.com/esl-games/](http://www.englishclub.com/esl-games/).

### **Podcasts or Vodcasts to Enhance English Learning in Your Classroom**

A *podcast* is an audio recording of an activity made and accessed via the Internet; a *vodcast* includes visual images, and is therefore an audiovisual recording of an activity. All of the activities discussed here can be recorded as podcasts or vodcasts and made a permanent part of your classroom library for students to enjoy. Some students who are reluctant to engage in oral language activities may feel more comfortable with podcasts because they will be able to edit and re-record their work before it is considered complete and ready to share with the whole class. Your students will have a lot of fun creating and acting out poetry, songs, dramas, and other activities in your class. You can even extend podcasts to include content instruction. For example, students might create a vignette on a topic they are studying in social science or share a science experiment. You'll find that students who were once reluctant to be involved in oral language activities are suddenly volunteering for participation. One site that introduces podcasts and contains many links to them is [www.esl.about.com/od/englishlistening/a/intropodcasts.htm](http://www.esl.about.com/od/englishlistening/a/intropodcasts.htm).

### **Songs**

Sing a song at least once a day! Songs bring levity, laughter, and beauty into your classroom. Songs also promote a feeling of unity in the class, particularly important when differences among students prevail. In addition, all students can participate at some level, regardless of English language proficiency. Some songs may be related to a theme or topic of study, whereas others may be favorite tunes suggested by your students. Bear in mind that songs are language based, so you will need to provide cues to meaning, such as pictures, pantomime, or gestures. One site containing songs and ideas for your classroom is <http://tefltunes.com/whyusesongs.aspx>. We recommend that you post song lyrics accompanied by pictures or rebus symbols to convey meaning. In addition, you may wish to copy lyrics for each student to illustrate and keep in a song book. Because songs are popular with all ages, this activity can be successful throughout the grades. Just make sure your students have some say in which songs they get to sing.



## Internet Resources

Randall's Cyber Listening Lab ([www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com)) contains hundreds of listening activities at easy, medium, and hard levels. It also contains information on speaking and pronunciation. Activities are listed under categories such as general, academic, and vocabulary. If you want to explore further the site has much more than just oral language information and activities. The Region 10 Education Service Center [www.region10.org/](http://www.region10.org/) contains specific lesson

plans in various content areas and downloads in areas such as sheltered instruction for secondary math and science, literacy stations in the bilingual classroom, language transfer issues and the EL, improving writing instruction for adolescent linguistically and culturally diverse students, word bag activity, and scaffolding language and learning: literacy strategies for ELs. The site also contains links to many other valuable sites.

One final note: Although we suggest songs for English language development, you might also want to invite any and all willing students to share a song with the class in their home language by bringing a recording or by singing it. It can be a fine cross-cultural experience for everyone. We remember the day an East Indian girl, Barjinder, sang a beautiful song in her native language. When she finished, the class sat in awed silence and then broke out in spontaneous clapping. Barjinder looked down with a smile, beaming with pride at her classmates' enthusiastic response.

## Drama

Acting out stories and events in math, science, history, literature, or theme studies can be a highly motivating way for students to process and present information they have studied. Dramatic enactments in the classroom range from informal to formal. For drama at its least formal, you can provide props in a dramatic play center of your classroom. During free time, students create their own dramas within the context of the props. Changing the props from time to time is important to stimulate new interest and new topics for dramatic play. One excellent site for drama lessons and hundreds of other lessons is <http://teachers.net/lessons/>.

Another dramatization technique has been developed by early childhood educator Vivian Paley (Weinborg, 1989). In this self-expression process, children first dictate a story for you to write down. Later, a child dramatizes the story with help from friends as you read the story during group time. A third way to encourage informal dramatization is to make props available for enacting stories that are currently being read in the classroom.

A favorite book of ours, *Improvisations for the Theater* (Spolin, 1963/1983), outlines numerous drama techniques, beginning with simple pantomimes, progressing to brief, context-embedded dialogues, and moving on to one-act plays. For example, early in the year, students might develop warm-up routines in which they mirror a partner's every move; later, they mime catching a ball that changes from a basketball to a soccer ball to a tennis ball. The nonverbal warm-up activities involve all students and create confidence and concentration, preparing them for later activities that require oral language use.

The next level of activities involves students in brief improvisations based on a situation for which they create a dialogue. For example, the teacher might say that the children are stuck in an elevator for 10 seconds, and then for five minutes, and, finally, for two hours. The students then create appropriate dialogue for each of the situations. Gradually, the activities lead students to where they can improvise little plays of their own. Drama activities provide students with a variety of contextualized and scaffolded activities that gradually involve more participation and more oral language proficiency; they are also nonthreatening and a lot of fun. The Spolin book and other books containing hundreds of developmentally appropriate activities are annotated at the end of this chapter.

### **Dramatizing Poetry**

Poetry also provides an excellent springboard for dramatization (Gasparro & Falletta, 1994) and is effective with English learners of all ages (see [http://mset.rst2.edu/portfolios/s/stringham\\_l/thesis/34poetry.htm](http://mset.rst2.edu/portfolios/s/stringham_l/thesis/34poetry.htm)). Selecting the right poem is essential. Poems that present mini-dramas or express strong emotions, attitudes, feelings, or opinions work best (Tomlinson, 1986). One such poem that appeals to all ages is "The Crocodile's Toothache" (Silverstein, 1974), a hilarious dialogue between a crocodile and its dentist. For poem enactment, you begin by reading the poem aloud, modeling not only pronunciation but also dramatic intonation and stress. You may wish to have the poem copied on chart paper with some pictures to help convey meaning. During the first readings, you need to clarify difficult or unusual words, making sure that your students generally understand the poem. If you like, you may next invite all your students to read the poem chorally. Finally, in pairs or groups, your students prepare a dramatic rendition of the poem to be presented to the entire class. If you find that you and your students enjoy dramatizing poetry, you will want to start a collection of poems that fit in with content areas and themes you teach. In this way, poem dramatizations will become integrated into your curriculum.

Recently, we had the opportunity to observe fourth-grade English learners performing a skit on the California Gold Rush, a topic designated by the state curriculum framework. In this integrated curriculum project, students incorporated songs, poems, and dramatizations in ways that promoted oral and written language development. The teacher began by providing a variety of experiences to give the students a feel for the Gold Rush era. The class visited historical museums where they learned about people arriving from all over the world by horse, by foot, by wagon train, and by ship to try their luck in the California foothills. Students sang songs of the era, such as "Sweet Betsy from Pike," and read poems and newspaper articles from the period. They saw films depicting gold panning, sluice boxes, and tent towns. They learned that miners wore denim jeans, giving the Levi Strauss Company its start as a factory outlet in San Francisco. They also made sourdough bread and sourdough pancakes. They even had the chance to pan for gold at a nearby park. The "gold" (painted rocks) had been planted beforehand by their industrious teacher. After these experiences, the children decided they wanted to write a play about a family moving to California to join the Gold Rush. The teacher divided the class into four groups, and each group put together a script for a short drama. Next, the groups gathered props for their skits. The teacher set aside an hour a day for one week for rehearsal. Finally, each

**EXPERT WEBCAST 4.1****The Power of Poetry (2:37)**

This clip is described on the site in the following way: "The poet Francisco Alarcon talks about two boys and their life-changing experiences because of poetry." The clip will make you want to have students write and share their poetry immediately.

[www.colorincolorado.org/calendar/celebrations/poetry](http://www.colorincolorado.org/calendar/celebrations/poetry)

group performed its 10-minute skit for the rest of the class as a culminating event. As it happened, the student teacher had arranged to videotape the skits, adding to students' excitement and pride.

In developing their skits, these fourth-graders used oral language for a variety of functions. In addition, they used written language to scaffold their oral performance of songs, poems, and the skit itself. First, they synthesized large amounts of information and selected aspects they wished to portray in their skit. They did this through informal discussion in small groups, proposing and evaluating ideas and then making decisions by consensus. Next, they created a basic story to tell in their skit, selected characters to play different roles, and wrote out dialogue. Some groups

incorporated songs and poems learned during the theme study. One group read aloud a letter written to a relative back home to convey the character's inner feelings. During rehearsal, students used a great deal of directive language to organize, practice, and perfect the skit. Finally, each group gave a formal performance of their skit. As a follow-up, the students critiqued the performances, including oral performance aspects, such as diction, volume, and pace. Because the skits had been videotaped, the children were able to see and hear themselves over again. As you can see, the oral language development opportunities in this theme study were rich and varied, while optimal oral performance was scaffolded by group support, the chance to work from written scripts, and multiple rehearsals.

As you develop instructional sequences with and for your students, you can begin to make note of the oral language opportunities inherent in them. From there, you can look for ways to incorporate more such opportunities, increasing the variety of functions and interactional formats available, such as pairs, small groups, and whole-class performances. It is important to point out that performances should take place only after students have had plenty of practice before the spotlight. Be sure to allow student choice in such events.

**Show and Tell**

Show and Tell, a strategy teachers have used for years, involves students bringing a favorite object, such as a teddy bear, to the class and telling the class about it; older students could bring an object they like, such as an automobile part, and see if students can guess what it is used for. The situation is context embedded because all the students can see the prized possession, making it easier for the audience to understand the child's words. This is a beginning activity for young language learners that can be expanded to more advanced, context-reduced oral language use by simply asking children to place the favorite object in a paper bag so that it is not visible to classmates. Then the owner of the object begins describing the object to the class. Because the item is not visible, the speaker must be more specific about the item to assist classmates in guessing what it is. Later in the year, students can work with more difficult objects that are not in a bag but in their imaginations, or they can have pictures in front of them that they describe to others. The variations of Show and Tell can scaffold children's early speaking with

objects on hand and can induce more accurate descriptions when their comfort and language levels are more advanced.

### **One Looks, One Doesn't**

In an activity called One Looks, One Doesn't, students work in pairs. To show how the activity works, you first display a picture to the whole class after explaining that one member of the pair may look at it while the other one looks away. The student who looks at the picture describes it to his or her partner, who attempts to draw it based on the partner's description. Because the describers can see their partner drawing the picture, they can adjust their language to assist the drawer; thus, the task is both easy and fun for the students. After five minutes or so, the picture is revealed and they get to see how accurate their communication was. This activity can also be developed for different levels of language use and proficiency. For example, the first pictures used might be quite concrete, such as a picture of a red car with a number of people in it; later, they might be more abstract or complex, such as a picture of a fantasy scene with wizards and goblins.

Another way you can change the complexity of the task as students become more proficient in their oral language is to ask the describer and drawer to place a book or some other object between them so that the describer cannot see what the artist is doing. This tests the accuracy of the describer and the listening accuracy of the artist. The first activity, in which the two can see one another, is similar to an oral language conversation and is context embedded because the individual who is talking can check to see if the person who is drawing is understanding what is being said. The second approach is closer to a written message, context reduced, and causes the communicator to be more specific and accurate to make sure that the response to the communication is effective.

### **Podcast Students' Re-Creations of Wordless Book Stories**

Working with partners, students can use a wordless picture book to create and podcast a story based on the pictures. Then they can play the story as they show the pictures to the rest of the class. You might have all the students share the same book at first to prepare them to work independently in pairs or small groups. Because listeners can see the pictures as each original rendition of the wordless book is being presented, story comprehension is scaffolded. Here is a list of some wordless books; those preceded by an asterisk are best for older children.

- Briggs, R. (1978). *The Snowman*. New York: Random House.
- Carle, E. (1971). *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* New York: Harper.
- Day, A. (1989). *Carl Goes Shopping*. New York: Farrar.
- Goodall, J. (1985). *Naughty Nancy Goes to School*. New York: Atheneum.
- McCully, E. (1984). *Picnic*. New York: Harper.
- Tafari, N. (1988). *Junglewalk*. New York: Greenwillow.
- Turkle, B. (1976). *Deep in the Forest*. New York: Dutton.
- \*Wiesner, D. (1988). *Free Fall*. New York: Lothrop.
- \*Wiesner, D. (1991). *Tuesday*. New York: Clarion.

### **Recording and Dubbing a Television Show**

One activity students enjoy is recording and dubbing their favorite television show, such as a cartoon, a sports event, or a situation comedy. We have found that older students enjoy using soap operas and action/adventure stories to share with one another. You begin by recording the program and showing it to the students without the sound. Alternatively, the original program may be played all the way through with sound first if you think it will help your students understand the original story. Then your students create their own script for the show and dub it either on the original videotape or onto an audiotape to play along with the video. Students work with partners or in small groups to re-create their own television show, which is then played back for their classmates. It's especially fun to see the different ways each group has treated the same visual story. It can also be interesting at this point to play the original show to compare it with the meanings students have imputed in their scripts. If you have questions about your particular use of a television show, check copyright laws.

This recording and dubbing activity allows students to choose some of their favorite television programs, negotiate the meaning of the pictures, and create their own drama to present to the class. Because they are familiar with the show, they are able to use its story structure to create their own play. Moreover, in small groups, children assist one another in understanding and re-creating their own stories. Because the scene is visual, it provides an additional channel of communication for English learners. Perhaps most important, script development of this sort is highly motivating, thus promoting functional and fun involvement in a multimedia language and literacy event. When this dramatic activity is used in classrooms, the students and teacher often laugh heartily at the outcomes of each group's drama, motivating them to create more scripts!

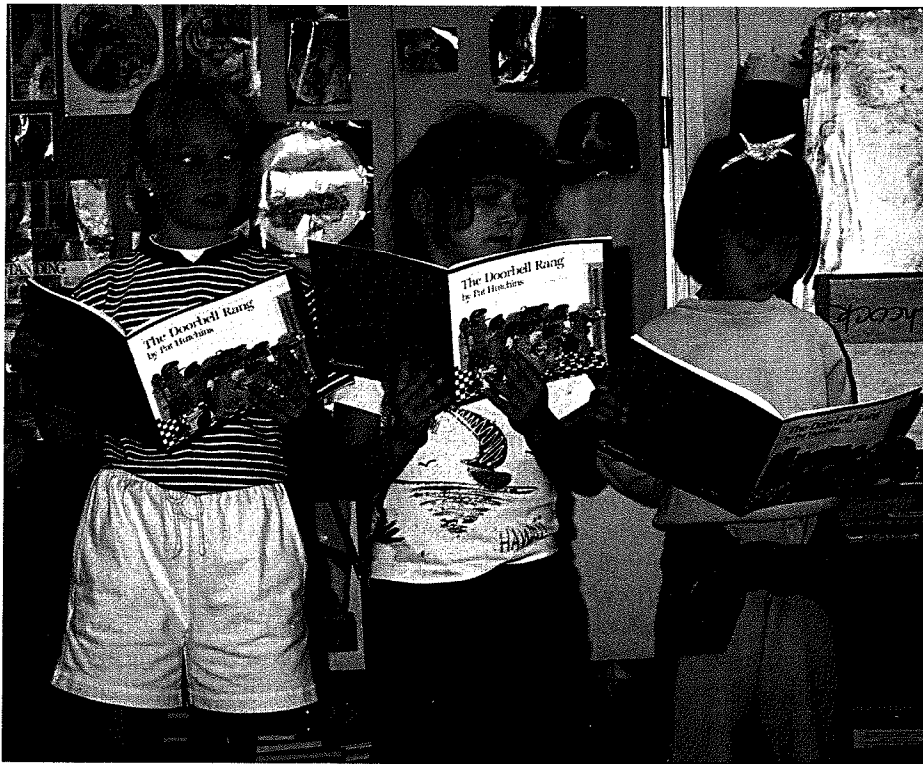
### **Choral Reading**

Have you ever been to a large gathering where there is community singing and found that you couldn't remember all the words to the song? You may have been able to succeed in the group singing because you could fake it: When you weren't sure about the next word, you could often sing the word a split second after others around you. In a sense you were experiencing the way a group singing scaffolds an unsure singer. Choral reading, a strategy involving students reading together, scaffolds English learners reading in a classroom in the same way (see [www.readingrockets.org/strategies/choral\\_reading/](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/choral_reading/)). By involving students in selecting the readings, you can ensure that students of all ages are afforded the benefits of choral reading.

When you use choral reading with English learners and other students, you need to select materials that are age appropriate and a little beyond what your students can read on their own—that is, in their zone of proximal development (McCauley & McCauley, 1992). See <http://myweb.stedwards.edu/mikekb/ReadStrong/choralreading.html> for ideas and use with older and younger students and then you're ready to begin. Next, you read the materials to students several times while showing the words to a poem or story. Then students can practice through repeated reading before they perform. During this practice phase, the students may brainstorm different ways to act out or pantomime the actions in the reading. Finally, students read the story together and act out the actions.

One of the powers of choral reading is that you can select books and have children select books for varying degrees of language and reading ability. Books and poems that lend themselves to more concrete actions and that have repeatable patterns, such as *The Very Busy Spider* (Carle, 1984), will be easier for students to understand. As students develop ability, they can still be challenged with more difficult books. We recently observed one first-grade class performing a choral reading of *Madeline* (Bemelmans, 1939). When they read each part of the story, they acted out the actions. For example, when the children in the story brushed their teeth, the choral readers brushed with much vigor; when the children ate, the performers pretended to eat as well. Dramatization, when combined with choral reading, allowed these English learners to be actively involved and reinforced the meaning of the story phrase by phrase.

Research indicates that choral reading helps children learn the intonation of English stories and improves their diction and fluency (Bradley & Thalgott, 1987). In addition, choral reading raises the enthusiasm and confidence of early readers (Stewig, 1981) and helps them expand their vocabulary (Sampson, Allen, & Sampson, 1990). Finally, children find great joy in choral reading and are eager to try it over and over with some of their favorite books. Choral reading need not be limited to young children. Poems, song lyrics, and picture books that appeal to older learners can serve as the basis for this enjoyable, low-anxiety oral language activity. You may select passages from literature such as *The House on Mango Street* (Cisneros, 1994) or poetry selections suggested in the district curriculum. Finally, consider asking your students to suggest song lyrics.



These first-graders put in a lot of effort preparing to present a choral reading to the fifth-graders of a favorite book. Their rehearsals had a genuine purpose, motivating them to perfect their reading through repetition and practice.

## Riddles and Jokes

Riddles and jokes can be a lot of fun for students at the intermediate English proficiency level. You will need to consider the extent to which the age and cultural backgrounds of your students will affect their understanding of the humor, though. One site that provides lots of jokes and podcasts of jokes is <http://iteslj.org/c/jokes.html>. As with all jokes, you'll want to check for their appropriateness; in addition, because the jokes from this site come from all over the world, you may find some unacceptable culturally. After selecting a joke or riddle, you might read some that you think are appropriate for the age, language level, and cultural backgrounds of your students, modeling for them what they will do when they have practiced their own riddles and jokes in small groups. Then you can set aside a day for your students to share the jokes. As an alternative, you might make riddles and jokes a part of your regular classroom routine, inviting student participation on a volunteer basis. The activity allows students to have fun with something they enjoy doing, helps them become more comfortable speaking in front of the class, and gives them a chance to rehearse before making their presentation.

In summary, there is a variety of oral language development opportunities available through drama, songs, poetry, riddles, and jokes. The activities described in this section facilitate oral language development in at least three ways: (1) They encourage students to work in groups on motivating projects; (2) they provide various scaffolds for oral language performance, including informal rehearsal, written scripts, and choral readings prior to spotlighted performances; and (3) they focus on fun uses of oral language, reducing the anxiety sometimes associated with using a non-native language. Finally, although these activities may be implemented solely for the sake of language development and community enjoyment, some can and should be integrated into academic projects in content-area learning, at least some of the time.

## Academic Language Development in Content-Area Instruction

In addition to integrating drama, music, and poetry into your academic curriculum, each of the content areas presents specific oral language demands and learning opportunities. In this section, we discuss mathematics, science, and social studies to illustrate how content-area instruction provides both content learning and academic language development if comprehension and learning are supported with sheltering strategies. Our discussion concerning second language development and content instruction applies to learners of all ages but is especially pertinent for upper elementary, middle, and high school.

### Oral English Development and Use in Mathematics

When teaching math in English, it's important to consider the language and learning needs of your English learners, and the particular cognitive-linguistic demands that math instruction places on your students. Mathematics is a formal and systematic approach to using numbers and number concepts for solving problems in



daily life and other areas, including research in the physical, social, and biological sciences. Most elementary math concepts (e.g., addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division; fractions and mixed numbers; inverse operations; and patterning and probability) can be illustrated through demonstration and manipulation of concrete objects, such as unifix cubes, beans, buttons, and pattern blocks. Using concrete objects is one way to make math concepts meaningful and more accessible. In fact, current mathematics pedagogy emphasizes extensive use of manipulatives to promote discovery of basic mathematics concepts, in a sequence that goes from concrete to pictorial to abstract (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 1989; Reys, Suydam, & Lindquist, 1991). Another way to make math concepts more meaningful and understandable is to embed them in real-life situations that your students have experienced.

All students, regardless of age or home language, must develop both the concepts and the academic language that mathematics uses to convey these concepts. Mathematical language, whether conveyed in English, Spanish, Chinese, or any other language, is specific, precise, and logical. As with all content instruction, English learners are best prepared to benefit from math instruction if they have attained at least an intermediate level of English language proficiency. However, English learners' prior math background, the difficulty of the material, and the extent to which the concepts can be conveyed nonverbally also affect the ease with which English learners learn math. Where feasible, primary language support for conceptual understanding may be helpful for many. Let's take a look at some aspects of English as used in mathematics that English learners and others need to control for successful learning.

Mathematical language includes unique vocabulary, sentence structures, semantic properties, and text structures, both oral and written, as discussed in full by Dale and Cuevas (1987) and summarized here. You generally teach these aspects of mathematical language through oral instruction or oral instruction supported by writing words, formulas, and equations on the chalkboard. Math vocabulary includes words that are specific to the discipline, such as *numerator*, *denominator*, *addend*, and *sum*. In addition, math vocabulary includes words students may already know but must now learn with a new meaning, such as *column*, *table*, *rational*, and *irrational*. As you consider the cognitive-linguistic load present in mathematics instruction, you need to keep in mind that certain difficult vocabulary may require review, preferably in the context of solving problems related to your students' daily experiences. For example, students need to learn that addition can be signaled by any of these words: *add*, *plus*, *combine*, *and*, *sum*, and *increased by*. Similarly, subtraction may be signaled by such words as *subtract from*, *decreased by*, *less*, *minus*, *differ*, and *less than*. These addition and subtraction examples come from Crandall, Dale, Rhodes, and Spanos (1985), cited in Dale and Cuevas (1987).

One of the best ways to promote cognitive processing of math concepts is through pair work and small-group problem solving. Here, we have an ideal situation for development of cognitively demanding oral language use. As students discuss how to approach a problem, they become conscious of problem-solving strategies. If you teach such strategies, you will help students develop both metacognitive skills and the kind of language we employ to guide our own thinking efforts—the heuristic function of language, in Halliday's terms (1985). Word problems provided in written format can be analyzed and discussed orally

and converted to appropriate mathematical formats to be solved. As you can see, mathematics requires substantial linguistic processing for students to understand and apply mathematical concepts and operations to problem solving.

### **Oral English Development and Use in Science**

Science abounds with cognitively demanding oral language uses, provided that it is taught using a process-oriented inquiry approach (Kessler & Quinn, 1987). Within such an approach, students work in pairs or groups to define a problem, state a hypothesis, gather data, record observations, draw conclusions relating data to the hypothesis, and explain and summarize findings. Scientific inquiry requires students to use academic language to convey the thinking involved in observing, classifying, comparing, measuring, inferring, predicting, concluding, synthesizing, and summarizing. In fact, researchers concerned with quality education for English learners have found that process-oriented science classes provide excellent language and content learning for students learning English (De Avila & Duncan, 1984; Kessler & Quinn, 1984; Mohan, 1986; Thomas & Collier, 2002).

The success of inquiry-based science projects for English learners is attributable to three major factors: (1) Students investigate real science problems that engage their natural curiosity about the world, such as plant growth, the solar system, electricity, and magnetism; (2) students are actively engaged in investigations involving hands-on activities, actual observations, and lab work rather than solely reading facts and theories in a textbook; and (3) students carry out investigations in groups that promote talking out their thinking and planning. What we see, then, is that inquiry-based science provides many opportunities for higher-level thinking through use of context-embedded oral language aimed at solving scientific problems, creating ideal opportunities for both language and content learning.

You will increase motivation and facilitate comprehension of science concepts if you connect these concepts to students' prior knowledge. For English learners, prior knowledge is apt to reflect different cultural assumptions from your own. You will want to bear in mind that every culture has its own theories and beliefs about many domains of science, such as classification of plants and animals and explanations for the movements of celestial bodies. Kessler and Quinn (1987) point out that miscommunications may arise with your English learners when they start with assumptions about the world that are different from yours. For these reasons, you will need to find ways to identify your students' prior knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions about phenomena you are studying. Students' observations and thinking may conflict with previous notions about the physical world, and these conflicts are most likely to come to light during group discussions. Such "sociocognitive conflict" is a natural part of scientific learning that we all go through, however, and should be considered as positive (Kessler & Quinn, 1987). We recall writer Eudora Welty (1983) telling about a short story she had written in which she described the moon rising in the west. Her editor promptly advised her to be more accurate in her settings, creating both sociocognitive conflict and an immediately relevant learning opportunity for Welty!

There are certain kinds of academic language use associated with science that all students, including English learners, need to learn. Vocabulary related to a particular scientific domain is necessary for precision in identifying and describing concepts (e.g., *periodic table*, *element*, *ion*) and naming materials and

tools (e.g., *microscope*). In addition, students need to develop the ability to put together logical descriptions of experimental procedures and findings. Logical descriptions require careful sequencing of information held together by cohesive ties such as *however*, *therefore*, *because*, and *in conclusion*. Research shows that using cohesive ties in both oral and written language is especially difficult for English learners—a topic addressed in detail in Chapter 9 (Goldman & Murray, 1989, 1992). Oral discussions in pairs or groups will assist students in conceptually organizing their results for a clear presentation, oral or written.

As you can see, full participation in inquiry-based science requires at least an intermediate level of English proficiency, although beginners may benefit as well, particularly if sheltering strategies are used and if primary language support is provided by the teacher or paraprofessional. In addition to rich oral English learning opportunities, science projects offer natural and necessary math applications. We describe strategies for integrating oral language, literacy, and content areas, including strategies for reading and writing research reports, in Chapters 9 and 10.

### **Oral English Development and Use in Social Studies**

In some ways, the concepts, generalizations, and understandings required for social studies depend heavily on oral and written verbal descriptions and explanations. This is especially true for a discipline such as history, which concerns people and places no longer available for direct viewing. Nonetheless, social studies topics may be made more concrete for students through films, pictures, videotapes, and museum visits. In addition, students may study their own communities and family histories as a personally relevant social science project through which they can learn social science inquiry methods, such as survey, interview, and observation. Finally, students will benefit from group discussions to help them understand and communicate what they have learned. In addition to research efforts carried out through oral language interactions, students need access to information that may be available only in written form. Literacy skills are thus essential. We provide many strategies for content-area reading and writing in Chapters 9 and 10. Here we will briefly review some of the oral language development opportunities inherent in the study of the social sciences.

The social sciences present oral language opportunities in a variety of ways. Chances are you will be presenting information orally to students some of the time through a lecture format. If you use pictures, graphs, flowcharts, gestures, and other visual supports to convey meaning, you will increase students' concept development while providing oral language development opportunities. All of the sheltering strategies presented in Chapter 3 are appropriate not only for social studies instruction but for other content areas as well.

Social studies also provides opportunities for students to present simulations or reenactments of historical or political events. We saw earlier how fourth-graders wrote and presented a play depicting the California Gold Rush, incorporating songs and poems. Playing the part of legislators, students may debate a proposed bill or dramatize the process of enacting legislation. In addition, groups of students may select particular topics to study in depth, as in the jigsaw cooperative group procedure described in Chapter 3. As experts, they then present their findings to the class. When students make presentations to the class, they should always support their talk with visuals they have prepared to convey meaning.

Through presentations such as these, presenters organize information and rehearse it for effective oral delivery. Listeners benefit in content and language development from the sheltered delivery provided by their peers. As you gain practice in analyzing the social studies content you teach, you need to find ways (1) to present the content through visuals, dramatizations, and other multimedia; and (2) to increase students' use of oral language to discuss, analyze, synthesize, and summarize information—that is, their academic language use.

In summary, we have briefly described oral language development demands and learning opportunities inherent in mathematics, science, and social studies. Our discussion is intended to illustrate ways of looking at the content you teach in terms of the oral language required for learning. If you are a content-area teacher, you know your subject area in depth. As you review your lesson plans, you will want to think about the kinds of oral and written language required for your English learners to understand the concepts and to demonstrate their learning. In all content areas, sheltering strategies should be used along with hands-on, direct experiences for inquiry and discovery. In addition, students should be given time and opportunity to process information orally in pairs and groups. They also need time and opportunity to rehearse for oral presentations. Given such time and opportunity, your students will advance in English language development while learning subject matter with greater understanding and retention than would otherwise be possible.

## **Classroom Assessment of English Learners' Oral Language Development**

In Chapter 3, we described formal, standardized language proficiency tests that serve the purpose of program assignment. In this section, we describe ways to document and assess students' oral language progress through classroom observation using checklists, anecdotal observations, and a structured oral language observation instrument called the *Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)*. The SOLOM focuses your attention on five oral language traits: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Checklists can be constructed to include any of a variety of oral language behaviors that you wish to document, including particular grammatical structures, vocabulary, conversational interactions, and presentational skills. Anecdotal observations consist of on-the-spot narrative accounts of student oral language use during particular classroom activities. Each of these observation techniques allows you to evaluate your students' use of oral language forms as they are used to serve communicative functions in particular social contexts in the classroom. We discuss the SOLOM oral language performance checklists and anecdotal observations here.

### **The Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)**

Teacher judgment is one of the most important and accurate measures of English learners' oral language development. One observational instrument that teachers can use to assess their students' oral proficiency is SOLOM, shown in Figure 4.2. With this tool, your observations of student oral language use during day-to-day

**FIGURE 4.2 SOLOM: Student Oral Language Observation Matrix**

	1	2	3	4	5
A Comprehension	Cannot be said to understand even a simple conversation.	Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only "social conversation" spoken slowly and with frequent repetitions.	Understands most of what is said at slower-than-normal speed with repetitions.	Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary.	Understands everyday conversation and normal classroom discussions without difficulty.
B Fluency	Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible.	Usually hesitant; often forced into silence by language limitations.	Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussion frequently disrupted by the student's search for the correct manner of expression.	Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions generally fluent, with occasional lapses while the student searches for the correct manner of expression.	Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions fluent and effortless, approximating that of a native speaker.
C Vocabulary	Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.	Misuse of words and limited vocabulary; comprehension quite difficult.	Student frequently uses the wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.	Student occasionally uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies.	Use of vocabulary and idioms approximates that of a native speaker.
D Pronunciation	Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.	Hard to understand because of pronunciation problems. Must frequently repeat to make himself or herself understood.	Pronunciation problems necessitate concentration on the part of the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding.	Always intelligible though one is conscious of a definite accent and occasional inappropriate intonation patterns.	Pronunciation and intonation approximate that of a native speaker.
E Grammar	Errors in grammar and word order so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.	Grammar and word-order errors make comprehension difficult. Must often rephrase and/or restrict himself or herself to basic patterns.	Makes frequent errors of grammar and word order that occasionally obscure meaning.	Occasionally makes grammatical and/or word-order errors that do not obscure meaning.	Grammatical usage and word order approximate that of a native speaker.

*SOLOM PHASES: Phase I: Score 5–11 = non-English proficient; Phase II: Score 12–18 = limited English proficient; Phase III: Score 19–24 = limited English proficient; Phase IV: Score 25 = fully English proficient.*

Based on your observation of the student, indicate with an "X" across the block in each category that best describes the student's abilities. The SOLOM should only be administered by persons who themselves score at level "4" or above in all categories in the language being assessed. Students scoring at level "1" in all categories can be said to have no proficiency in the language.

Source: Courtesy of California State Department of Education, 1981.

classroom activities stand in place of formally elicited language samples used by the commercial tests, such as the language assessment scales and others described in Chapter 3. As the teacher, you will be able to observe your students periodically over the year in a variety of naturally occurring classroom situations. As a result, your cumulative observations of student oral language use will be much richer, more natural, and more educationally relevant than a standardized test (Goodman, Goodman, & Hood, 1989). In addition, your students will be focused on the classroom task, alleviating the anxiety factor typical of testing situations. By combining your focused observations over time with the descriptive evaluations in the SOLOM, you will be able to document student progress in English oral language development.

While you observe students during day-to-day classroom activities, the SOLOM is organized to focus your attention on general oral language traits: comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. Thus, you are, in fact, evaluating student language on several analytic dimensions. Your ratings are ultimately subjective and require substantial linguistic sensitivity to be accurate and meaningful. However, we believe that you can develop such sensitivity through guided experience in language observation and analysis. Research, in fact, supports teacher efficacy in rating students' second language oral proficiency, using procedures similar to the SOLOM (Jackson, 1980; Mace-Matluck, 1981).

To use the SOLOM, you observe a student during a classroom activity that promotes oral language use, such as group work. Spend five minutes or so listening to the speech interactions among the members of the group, paying particular attention to the student or students you wish to evaluate. During the observation itself, or shortly afterward, fill out one observation form per student according to the descriptive traits outlined for you on the form. If you are using the SOLOM to document student progress over the course of the year, you need to make sure that the social context of your observations is similar each time to ensure comparability of performance. For example, you may wish to make cooperative group work your primary observation time. To get a richer picture of your student's oral proficiency, you should observe several different contexts, such as formal presentations in front of the class, cooperative group work, and individual conferences with you when discussing schoolwork. These contexts are not test contexts, but rather involve students as they carry out routine classroom activities. As a result, you are evaluating authentic oral language used for real, day-to-day classroom purposes.

Figure 4.2 explains how to score the SOLOM. As you can see, each trait (i.e., comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar) receives a rating from 1 to 5, according to the descriptors. After writing an X on the appropriate descriptors, you tally the ratings for all five traits. The SOLOM yields four phases of English language proficiency: Phase I, 5–11, non-English proficient; Phase II, 12–18, limited English proficient; Phase III, 19–24, limited English proficient; and Phase IV, 25, fully English proficient. Notice that both Phases II and III are described as limited English proficient.

For an example of a SOLOM evaluation, let's return to Teresa, the fifth-grader whose *Poltergeist* narrative we offered as an example of an intermediate English speaker previously in this chapter (Example 4.2). Teresa, a fluent Spanish

speaker who came to California in the third grade, is fluent in oral and written Spanish. She has been enrolled in a bilingual program since her arrival, and she has been learning English for two years. We have reproduced Teresa's narrative below for you to read again, this time with some additional conversational interchanges lasting a total of 85 seconds. As you read through the transcript, consider how you might evaluate Teresa's oral language performance based on the SOLOM descriptors for comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation.

*Suzanne:* But at least you got to see *Poltergeist*.

*Teresa:* Yeah.

*Suzanne:* Was it scary?

*Teresa:* No, it wasn't scary. But well . . . at first it was scary but then the other one no. Because there was . . . First a little girl . . . There was a television and the father was sleeping in the . . . in a . . . *sillón?* in like a chair. And then the little girl pass the television and she said, "Right here!" Then . . . then a hand get out of the television and she said, "Ouch!" And then a little boy was sleeping and the little girl sleep here and the little boy here and then he see all the time a tree and then . . . then . . . there was outside a tree . . . a tree. But it look ugly in the night. It look like a face . . . And then he was scary. Then he tell his father and his father said OK. Just count 1, 2, 3 to not escare. Then . . . then . . . the . . . he . . . the little girl and the little . . . the two brothers go in with the mother and her father because they're still escare. Then the other night . . . the little boy was . . . everyday he was counting and counting and he get up to . . . up to 2,000. He say 2,000, 2,001 and the hand of the tree get up like that . . . and the hand of the tree get up like that . . . And the . . . then the other escare that . . . because he broke the window. The tree. And the hand. And he get the boy and he said, "Mommy, mommy help me!" And then . . . But the tree was . . . I think the house was . . . it was haunting because there was a lot of the . . . of the . . . in the movie there came out many . . . um . . . many men but they are bad. They was ugly.

*Suzanne:* Ooh, were they skeletons?

*Teresa:* Yeah.

*Suzanne:* Or were they ghosts?

*Teresa:* They look like a ghost. They were a ghost and . . .

At this point another student interrupted. Discussion of the movie ended.

Now let's evaluate Teresa's oral language based on this sample. First, take a look at the descriptors for comprehension. Because Teresa does most of the talking, we do not have a great deal to go on to evaluate her comprehension. Based on her responses to questions and her comprehension of the movie itself, we give her a 4: "Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional

repetition may be necessary." For fluency, we have some trouble deciding between a 3 and a 4. Reviewing the transcript, we try to decide *how frequently* Teresa's speech is disrupted because of lack of fluency. Many of Teresa's repetitions and restarts are similar to those of native English speakers. In and of themselves they do not disrupt communication. However, there are three instances in which Teresa seems to be searching, somewhat unsuccessfully, for a way to express herself. The first time is at the beginning when she says, "No, it wasn't scary. But well . . . at first it was scary but then the other one no. Because there was . . . First a little girl." It takes her five tries to get into the narrative. After that, however, she is off and running until she says, "Then . . . then . . . the . . . he . . . the little girl and the little . . . the two brothers go in with the mother and her father . . ." Here again her fluency is interrupted by hesitations and restarts. She seems to have been searching for a word meaning "brother and sister." The closest word in English, though not commonly used in conversation, is *siblings*. Teresa apparently uses a direct translation of *los hermanos*, the brothers.

In Spanish *los hermanos* can mean "the brothers," but it can also mean "the brothers and sisters," or "the brother and sister." Therefore, it has a broader range of meaning than "the brothers" in English. As a result, when Teresa uses the direct translation, her meaning becomes confused. The third example of disfluency occurs at the end when she says, "And the . . . then the other escare that . . . because he broke the window. The tree. And the hand. And he get the boy and he said, 'Mommy, mommy help me!'" These three instances of disfluency go beyond repetitions and restarts found in natural, spontaneous speech of native and non-native speakers alike. We decide that these disruptions are infrequent enough to rate this oral language sample as a 4: "Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions generally fluent, with occasional lapses while the student searches for the correct manner of expression."

For vocabulary, we are again torn between 3 and 4 to describe Teresa's oral performance. As with the fluency trait, it is the word *frequently* that we have to consider carefully. We decide on 4: "Student occasionally uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies." For example, she uses the word *sillón*, rephrasing it as *chair*. Although her vocabulary is not rich, we think that it is usually adequate for her purposes, thus the 4.

For evaluating pronunciation we rely on the audiotape because our written transcript conveys only a few aspects of her pronunciation. We rate the sample as a 3: "Pronunciation problems necessitate concentration on the part of the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding." Teresa is not "very hard to understand" as in the descriptor for a 2, nor "always intelligible" as in the descriptor for a 4. Therefore, the 3 rating fits well. For grammar, we find ourselves trying to decide whether Teresa's grammatical errors are frequent (3 occurrences) or occasional (4 occurrences). We decide on a 4, primarily because her grammar and word-order errors do not obscure meaning for us. She demonstrates one error consistently: the omission of the *-s* on third-person singular verbs, such as *he see* and *it look like*. In a similar vein, she says, "... a hand get out." Teresa uses the present tense form for indicating both present and past tense, a fairly typical strategy that often persists rather late in second language acquisition, but does not seriously impede communication. She also uses non-native English word order at times, such as "He see all the time a tree" and "There was outside a tree." For us, these errors do not impede communication, so we are comfortable with the 4 rating.



Now that we have rated Teresa's oral language performance on the SOLOM traits, we add the scores for a final rating.

Comprehension:	4
Fluency:	4
Vocabulary:	4
Pronunciation:	3
Grammar:	<u>4</u>
Total:	19, or Phase III: limited English proficient

Let's talk for a moment about the rating process for the SOLOM. You must have noticed that we had difficulty choosing between ratings on some dimensions. You might have rated Teresa's sample differently yourself. In fact, when we ask our students to fill out the SOLOM for Teresa's narrative, there are always some variations in trait scores and the resulting total score. For one thing, the taped narrative, although useful as an introduction to the SOLOM, lacks the major strength inherent in the tool: *in-person observation of natural language use in your own classroom*. If you were getting ready to make instructional or programmatic decisions for Teresa, you would need several in-person observations on which to base your SOLOM ratings.

Another factor influencing ratings is the extent to which raters are accustomed to the non-native speech patterns of English learners. The important thing in using the SOLOM is to apply the descriptive criteria as consistently as possible. It is also important to notice that a broad range of scores, from 14 to 24, yields a "limited English proficient" label, although divided into Phase II and Phase III. Thus, the SOLOM offers additional descriptive detail and analysis within the category "LEP," highlighting the fact that "LEP" actually covers a rather broad range of second language development. The SOLOM, then, provides a general index of oral language proficiency that is based on actual oral language use during day-to-day classroom activities, such as group work, teacher-student conferences, and classroom presentations. By building a set of observations over time, you will obtain a developmental picture of oral language progress.

What instructional implications can be drawn for Teresa? First, Teresa has sufficient English oral language proficiency to benefit from academic instruction delivered in English, provided that sheltering or specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE) techniques are used to ensure lesson comprehension. Moreover, substantial exposure to academically demanding material in English is precisely what she needs to challenge her to higher levels of second language development. However, Teresa still needs the educational support of a bilingual or English language development program. She will benefit from reading, writing, and making oral presentations in English with scaffolding provided by the teacher and other students who are more advanced in English language development. At the moment, she struggles when reading in English, though she is fluent, successful, and enthusiastic when reading in her home language, Spanish. We would encourage her continued Spanish literacy use and development, while providing structured opportunities for her to read and use a wide variety of English language materials supported by opportunities for buddy reading, story mapping, literature discussion, and other strategies for intermediate-level students described in Chapters 6 through 9.

In summary, oral language assessments based on the SOLOM may be used as one source of information, among several, to inform decisions to reclassify students to the category of fully English proficient, as discussed in Chapter 3. In addition, SOLOM data may be collected periodically and placed in a student's language development portfolio. For this purpose, the descriptive statements and total score are more useful for documenting student progress than the designations of non-English proficient (NEP), limited English proficient (LEP), and fully English proficient (FEP). By including periodic SOLOM observations in the student's portfolio, you form a developmental picture of oral language progress over time that will provide a solid basis for instructional decisions.

### **Checklists and Anecdotal Observations**

The SOLOM provides a general index of oral language proficiency. Two other assessment tools—checklists and anecdotal observations—may also be used to provide additional information about your students' ability to use oral English for a variety of purposes. Checklists can be useful because you can tailor them to your specific evaluation needs. In addition, checklists are convenient to use because they list the behaviors to look for and merely require a check off. However, when you devise a checklist, you need to try to include any and all potential behaviors, and leaving a place for "other" so that you can list unexpected behaviors. Another benefit of checklists is the focus on holistic observations of students in the course of day-to-day classroom language use, as is the case with the SOLOM and anecdotal records.

An anecdotal record is a running account of an observed oral language event, written on the spot, describing the event and quoting the participants as closely as possible to convey how the interaction unfolds in real time. Anecdotal observations require considerable effort and focused attention because you must observe and interpret the flow of a social interaction while simultaneously recording it. The benefit of anecdotal observations is that you record interactions as they occur, rather than filling in a checklist. Consequently, anecdotal observations are much more open-ended and provide much richer detail of student behavior. As you make your written account, you provide some on-the-spot analysis, but you also have a narrative record to review later, at which time you might see and understand something that was not evident to you during the observation. A drawback to anecdotal observations is that they start with a blank page. It takes some practice and training to know what to look for and how to "see" when observing, because what you see depends a great deal on how well you understand what you are observing. In addition, the quick pace and complexity of student interactions can be difficult to capture on a page. Some teachers, particularly those interested in conducting their own classroom research, have chosen to use videotapes to back up their on-the-spot observations.

We offer two oral language observation forms in Figures 4.3 and 4.4. These two forms combine the use of checklists and anecdotal observations. If your instructional program requires that you document your student's oral language development with greater specificity than that provided by standardized tests or the SOLOM, we recommend that you consider these two forms and modify them according to the goals and objectives of your program. Both forms focus your attention on participation structures or interaction patterns. These are the grouping

**FIGURE 4.3** Informal Chart to follow the Oral Language Development of Your Students

CLASSROOM INVOLVEMENT	BEGINNING LEVEL	INTERMEDIATE LEVEL	ADVANCED LEVEL
Functions: Informal talk Reporting Discussing Describing Explaining Questioning Debating Evaluating Persuading			
Interaction patterns: Partners Small groups Large groups			
Linguistic elements: Vocabulary Syntax Organization Ideas Audience sensitivity			
Other Comments:	Student Name _____ Date _____		

Source: Based on M. H. Buckley, "Oral Language Guidelines," unpublished workshop handout, 1981.

structures within which students interact during your observation. Your form will need to reflect the actual grouping structures that you use in your classroom. Each form also lists a number of language functions often served during classroom interactions. As we observe English learners, we want to see how well they are able to achieve communicative goals and purposes through their developing English skills.

Each of the two forms offers examples of classroom language functions that you might look for as your students interact. The language functions in Figure 4.3 are based on Buckley (1981), whereas those in Figure 4.4 are based on Halliday (1975), described previously in this chapter. You may want to add, elaborate, or modify classroom language functions to suit your curriculum. Finally, each form includes linguistic elements or language forms to call your attention to grammar, pronunciation, vocabulary, and your students' ability to coordinate these as they produce different oral discourse structures, such as conversations, debates, and formal presentations to the class.

Although both forms address (1) participation structure, (2) language functions, and (3) language forms, the two forms are designed to be used differently. The chart in Figure 4.3 is a modified checklist in which you determine on the spot whether the student is performing at a beginning, intermediate, or advanced

**FIGURE 4.4 Oral Language Observation Chart**

Student Name \_\_\_\_\_ Subject \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

ACTIVITY	ANECDOTAL OBSERVATIONS
Participation structure: Formal presentation <span style="display: inline-block; vertical-align: middle; margin-left: 10px;">             ↙ individual              ↘ group           </span> Structured cooperative group work Informal group work Pair work	
Language functions: Heuristic Hypothesizes Predicts Infers Considers Asks Reports Informative Describes Explains Synthesizes Summarizes Clarifies Responds Retells Instrumental Requests Asks for Regulatory Directs Commands Convinces Persuades Personal and interactional Divertive and imaginative	
• Language forms: Vocabulary: particular to domain and general vocabulary Sentence structures: declarative question command exclamation grammatical correctness Morphology: Phonology: Discourse:	Overall evaluation:

level. For each category, there is room for you to jot notes that describe aspects of student performance that support your judgment. The chart in Figure 4.4 is set up for you to keep a running record of the entire interaction. To use this chart, you first fill out the name, subject, and date, and then circle the participation structure you are observing. Next, you write a narrative that describes what is happening, who is saying what to whom, and what is accomplished during the interaction. The descriptors listed under language functions and language forms serve as reminders of forms and functions that your student might use during the interaction. After the observation, you review the narrative and make an overall evaluation of the student's performance in terms of language forms and functions within this particular type of grouping format or participation structure.

In summary, the detail with which you document oral performance among the English learners in your classroom will depend on the goals and objectives of your instructional program. General observations such as those prompted by the SOLOM may suffice. If greater specificity is needed, language observations structured along the lines of the charts just discussed may be implemented. In that case, you will probably need to develop documentation forms that are tailored to your program, your students, and your classroom organization patterns. Systematic observations carried out periodically are appropriately placed in a student's portfolio and will provide a record of oral language development over time.

## Differentiating Instruction for Oral Language Development

Differentiating instruction for oral language development requires us to consider each student's oral English proficiency *in relation to* lesson standards, objectives, and performance expectations. Your daily interactions with students should give you a good sense of their various oral abilities. In addition, you may wish to focus your observations using assessment procedures described in this chapter (Figure 4.2), language use for classroom interactions and involvement (Figure 4.3), and the types of oral language engagement for participation (Figure 4.4). These tools will help you match instruction and performance expectations with students' oral language abilities. In addition, knowing your students' oral English levels will help you decide how to group students for optimal participation, such as pairs and triads. For example, you may want *small groups* of students with *varied oral English proficiency* levels for some activities to encourage oral language use. It is also helpful to know your students' primary language abilities. You may, for example, want to pair a newcomer with a bilingual student to help the newcomer understand directions and get started. Next, you determine the strategies and materials you will use to facilitate content learning among students of varied oral English proficiency levels. Finally, you decide how to determine and document learning.

In this chapter, and throughout the book, we have set up several features to help you differentiate instruction. To begin with, the teaching activities we described are grouped, broadly speaking, for beginning and intermediate English

**FIGURE 4.5** Grade Levels at Which Strategies May Be Used

STRATEGY \ GRADE LEVEL	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Drama													→
Dubbing TV shows			→										→
Jokes				→									→
One Looks/One Doesn't		→											→
Riddles				→									→
Scaffolds:													
Create advertisement		→											→
Create board game				→									→
Create comic books				→									→
Create popular song			→										→
Draw scene/char.	→												→
Dress up figures	→						→						
Make wanted posters			→										→
Pictures/collages	→												→
Select music for story	→												→
Turn poem into song					→								→
Show and Tell	→				→								
SOLOM	→												→
Songs	→												→
Wordless book stories	→												→

learners. In addition, Figure 4.5 indicates different grade levels for which each strategy is appropriate. These features, together with your assessment of a student's oral English using strategies we describe, should give you a good start for planning differentiated instruction. In addition, you may recall our framework from Chapter 3 addressing the questions: *who*, *what*, *how*, and *how well*. We use that framework now to illustrate differentiated planning for a lesson that forms part of a larger study on travel. This particular theme study integrates mathematics (calculating distances), social studies (history of transportation), and English language development.

**Who?** Students in grades 2 to 4 identified as **beginning to early advanced** in oral English proficiency. The students are from a variety of primary language backgrounds and cultures; most have had experiences using public transportation and personal vehicles both in their home cultures and in the United States.

**What?** Students use oral language to plan and present a poem that incorporates familiar and new vocabulary in the construction of simple prepositional phrases. The poem follows the scaffolding structure seen here, taken from *Let's Write and Sing a Song* (Pertchik, Vineis, & Jones, 1992). Students work in small groups to

write three verses, each identifying a different vehicle (airplane), the place it travels (sky), and the title of the operator (pilot).

*We go from here to there, from there to here, but if it's too far to walk what will we do?*

*We can ride in/on \_\_\_\_\_, in/on \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_*  
 (vehicle) (place it travels) (person who operates it)

Students are given the following three examples. Using Total Physical Response (see Chapter 7), they perform the poem/song along with the teacher.

<u>Vehicle</u>	<u>Place it travels</u>	<u>Person who operates it</u>
in a boat	on the water	with the captain
in a plane	in the sky	with the pilot
on a skateboard	on the sidewalk	our friends

**How?** Students will work in triads to compose three verses of the poem based on the model, working in homogeneous groups that mirror their instructional levels and abilities. Students may use their primary language to clarify directions and identify forms of transportation; thereafter, they may refer to dictionaries or peers for English terms they don't know. Those who are **beginning** will be given picture dictionaries to determine vocabulary. Students who are **intermediate** and **advanced** will draw on their knowledge of English, with monolingual English and bilingual dictionaries available as well. As a culminating activity, each group will write and perform the poem in a group for the class.

**How Well?** The SOLOM will be used to assess oral language use in small groups. A rubric checklist that includes correct use of prepositional phrases, appropriate syntax, and pronunciation will be used to assess oral performance of the poem during the culminating activity.

## Summary

In this chapter, we focused on oral language development in second language acquisition. We began by describing how listening, speaking, reading, and writing are intertwined in daily use. We also noted that each of these language processes supports the others during language development. We showed how natural oral language functions can be connected to your classroom routines and discussed the importance of integrating oral language with reading and writing activities. We also showed how oral language learning opportunities are inherent in academic subjects, such as mathematics, science, and social studies. We offered various classroom activities to motivate students and enhance English language development. We then described developmental oral language characteristics of English learners by presenting an oral language observation instrument, the SOLOM, followed by examples of speech from beginning and intermediate English speakers. We also offered ideas for structuring your observation and evaluation of students'

oral performance by using modified checklists and anecdotal observation records. Finally, we discussed differentiated instruction and provided an example lesson that integrates assessment, instruction and differentiation according to English learners' varying levels of language development.

We believe that by integrating drama, poetry, and songs into your curriculum, by creating a secure climate where all students want to share, and by providing opportunities for students to process and present academic material in small groups and in front of the class, you will assist English learners with oral language development. In Figure 4.5 we summarized the strategies discussed in the chapter. The chart provides a general grade-level guideline for using strategies in the chapter, but only you can make the best decision concerning whether students are prepared to work with various strategies in your classroom.

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## Additional Internet Resources

### ■ CAL Center for Applied Linguistics

[www.cal.org/siteMap.html](http://www.cal.org/siteMap.html): This site contains a new outline of high-level webpages, which makes it easier to navigate. For example, under English Learners you'll find categories such as PreK–12, SIOP, Teacher Education, and Bilingual Education. Under Teacher Education you'll find other links such as "Integrated Content and Language Instruction" and "Professional Development for Teachers in Culturally Diverse Schools."

### ■ Oral Language Development

[www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/oral/](http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/content/oral/): Colorin Colorado is a rich site for every aspect of working with English learners. This oral language development site gives specific ideas about using Total Physical Response (TPR) with beginners.

### ■ Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab

[www.esl-lab.com](http://www.esl-lab.com): This site contains hundreds of listening activities at varying degrees of difficulty, from easy to very difficult. There are general listening quizzes with adult and children's voices on everyday subjects as well as listening for "Academic Purposes."

### ■ Teacher Tube

[www.teachertube.com/](http://www.teachertube.com/): One site you and your students can use is Teacher Tube. We particularly like the short videos on the site. You can enter key words "teacher tube" and click on the video link to get videos on mathematics, social science, English teaching, and blogging among others. There are 9,000 videos at this site and growing.

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## Suggestions for Further Reading

Genesee, F., Lindholm-Leary, K., Saunders, W. M., & Christian, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Educating English language learners: A synthesis of research evidence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This excellent synthesis of research includes chapters on oral language, cross-linguistic and cross-modal issues, literacy, instructional issues, and academic achievement. Each chapter contains a discussion of research and issues and a chart several pages long of the pertinent

research. This is an excellent, readable synthesis of research on English language learners.

Horwitz, E. (2008). *Becoming a language teacher: A practical guide to second language learning and teaching*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon.

Each chapter in this excellent book starts out with a "what" question such as "What should I know about Language Teaching Methodologies?" The chapters are strong theoretically and sound in their practical applications. Of



particular interest are two chapters: "What Should I Know about Teaching Listening?" and "What Should I Know about Teaching Speaking?"

Richards, J., & Renandya, W. (Eds.). (2002). *Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

This is one of the best books of its type. It contains 41 short articles on topics ranging from speaking and listening to reading and writing, grammar and pronunciation, and assessment and technology. Articles are written by known experts in specific aspects of second language learning. If you could buy only one book, this might be the best choice.

Shameem, N., & Tickoo, M. (Eds.). (1999). *New ways in using communicative games in language teaching*. Bloomington, IL: TESOL.

The New Ways series is one every language teachers should have in their library. This book is full of excellent strategies, each presented by a different teacher, for developing oral language in your classroom. Sections include "Learning Communication Strategies," "Learning from One Another," and "Developing Skills in Discourse."

Silverstein, S. (1974). *Where the sidewalk ends*. New York: Harper & Row.

This book is full of poems children love to hear, act out, and read over and over again. The poems range from nonsense poems to fantasy to more serious. Our own classes have loved,

among others, "Ickle Me, Pickle Me, Tickle Me Too," "Captain Hook," "Listen to the Mustn'ts," "I'm Making a List," and "Boa Constrictor."

Spolin, V. (1963/1983). *Improvisations for the theater*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

This is a classic drama text for actors that we have used from the first year we began to teach. It starts with silent improvisations such as asking pairs to act out being mirrors of one another. It moves to small talking parts in which, for example, strangers are stuck in an elevator for 10 seconds, then five minutes, and finally for two hours. It ends with students acting out plays. The book contains over 100 meaningful activities for the classroom. This book is our favorite, but the author Viola Spolin also has several other useful books available through the same publisher.

Wright, W., Betteridge, D., & Buckby, M. (2002). *Games for language learning: New edition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

*Games for Language Learning* is in its 24th printing since 1983 and there's a reason why: It is an excellent resource for teachers who want to add to their repertoire in language learning and have fun at the same time. The authors provide activities ranging from controlled to guided to free, thus giving appropriate amounts of direction for students at beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language. There is a brief but useful introduction to using games in classrooms.

## Activities

1. Discuss with a partner or in a group the various oral language activities you have been involved in throughout your schooling. Were your teachers anxious to have you involved in group work or were you required to sit still and be quiet most of the time? Did you put on plays, puppet shows, or readers' theater after reading books, or were you in a class in which the book was read and the teacher asked questions about the book? Were you involved in panel discussions? Did you give formal speeches in class? What effect did your involvement or noninvolvement in oral language activities have on your overall interest in school and your capacity to learn?
2. It has been said that young children learn through their talking, that through talking they are able to think (Buckley, 1981). You will hear

young children talking even when they are playing by themselves. Children will talk aloud while they play with dolls or Legos or other toys. What would be the effect on children's language growth of organizing a class to be silent most of the time? What kind of classroom organization provides children with the greatest opportunities for language growth? In terms of language acquisition, are input and output equally important? Whose input and output?

3. If possible, observe a classroom in which students are involved in literature circles or literature response groups. How involved are the English language learners in this activity that relies mainly on language? Does the silence of some students mean that they are not involved? Would they be more involved if the same group of students were preparing a puppet show about a story they had read or if they were creating a poster advertising the story? Observe a class that uses various scaffolds for students and determine whether beginning English learners are more involved when scaffolds such as murals, drawings, or collages are used. What seems to involve intermediate and advanced English learners the most?
4. Help intermediate and advanced English learners set up a debate about a topic that particularly concerns them and have them present the debate in front of the class. Assist the students with learning formal rules of debate and help them with practicing before they present it. Provide students with a chart of specific guidelines for debating, preferably making the debate more like a discussion than a competition with winners or losers. Debates may be carried out in teams. Let students evaluate themselves based on the guidelines you provided at the beginning.
5. Observe an elementary school and a high school serving English learners. Arrange to observe a sheltered science lesson (or other content area) in each. When you observe, make a note of how the teachers use language and nonverbal cues to convey lesson content. In addition, make a note of how students interact during whole-class instruction and small-group work. After your observations, compare the elementary and high school lessons in terms of (1) the teachers' talk and sheltered instructional delivery, (2) the cognitive demands of the lesson content, and (3) the opportunities for oral language development made available through the lesson. What conclusions do you draw concerning the challenges teachers and students face? What are the similarities and differences between the elementary and secondary school lessons?
6. Make a focused observation of one English learner during small-group work when free talk is appropriate. Based on your observation, fill out the SOLOM observation chart. Discuss your evaluation with the teacher to see how your evaluation compares with the teacher's judgment. If there are discrepancies between your evaluation and that of the teacher, what might be some sources of these differences? Based on your experience, what are some of the advantages and disadvantages of the SOLOM?