

# Growing & Language & Literacy



# Growing & Language & Literacy

grades  
K-8

**STRATEGIES FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS**



**Andrea Honigsfeld**

HEINEMANN  
Portsmouth, NH

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→ **DEDICATION** ←

I dedicate this book to all the children who have come to this country with their hopes and aspirations and to their brave families who left everything behind to find a better life.

I also dedicate this book to my children, Ben, Jacob, and Noah. I have loved the wonderful years of watching them grow their languages and literacies.



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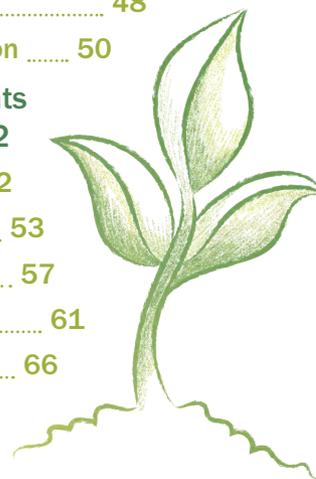


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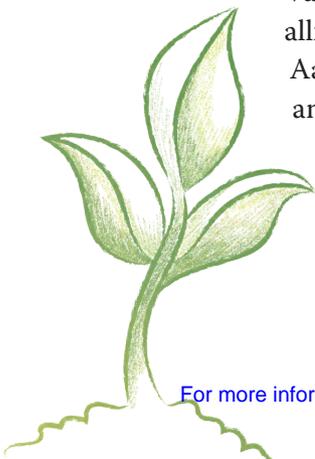
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Thank you, readers of this book: I wish you well when working with this population of students. I hope the book offers practical strategies coupled with a rich selection of examples and authentic illustrations that aid you in translating the strategies presented in the book to your own classroom and school.



A beautiful  
thing is never  
perfect.

—EGYPTIAN PROVERB

If you are reading this book, you are likely among the ever-growing group of teachers in the United States who have multilingual students in their classrooms and who face the challenges and joys of guiding them on a journey of cultural, linguistic, and academic explorations. Or you might be a student in a teacher education program, just beginning to explore the complexities of the profession, who eagerly (or perhaps a bit nervously) anticipates what it might be like to work with students who do not speak English (yet!). You might be a coach, school or district administrator, or teacher educator, who is looking for a quick-

to-read, user-friendly, accessible resource to address the diverse language and literacy proficiencies that coexist in many classrooms. My wish is that you find what you are looking for in this book.

## Some Key Concepts from Language Acquisition

Language acquisition and language learning are strictly separated by some researchers and practitioners. In this book, I suggest that the process of language acquisition and intentional learning in the academic context cannot be artificially separated, thus I tend to refer to them by a common term of *language development*. When I use the term *language proficiency*, I am referring to the child's linguistic competence to process language (such as listen and read) and

to produce language (such as speak and write). It is critical to recognize the variations that may occur among students and across language domains. Effective instruction will incorporate students' strengths as well as instructional strategies that support students' knowledge of the language and account for their levels of proficiency. Yet, a word of caution is in order.

Language development is neither static nor linear. Although there are five consecutive chapters depicting language progressions, offering snapshots of students at various stages of their language proficiency, keep in mind that language acquisition is fluid and dynamic. Students come with vast individual differences in their backgrounds and experiences, so at any given moment, some students may exhibit some abilities at a higher proficiency level and other students at a lower one. Language proficiency levels cannot define who a student is; instead, each level simply offers a frame of reference what the student is able to do (Shafer Willner 2013).

To avoid a static notion of student abilities, maintain a flexible and growth-oriented mind-set when working with English learners (ELs) and when reading this book. Use strategies from across multiple chapters to respond to your students' dynamic language development needs (Heritage, Linqunti, and Walqui 2015).

Focusing on what students can do, as opposed to what they cannot do, is more likely to make students feel empowered and able to learn to English. According to a deficit model, students are at an academic disadvantage due to their cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds, including their lack of or limited ability to communicate in English. In contrast, an assets-based model of education considers and intentionally builds upon the values, lived experiences, language patterns, and background knowledge students bring and sees them as strengths and advantages that support, not hinder, learning. As Walqui and van Lier (2010) sum up, the assets-based approach “looks ahead to what students can become and that builds on the knowledge, beliefs, and values all students bring to school” (x).

## Five Basic Premises

This book is built on five tenets that both informed the writing of this book and offer an overarching framework for my work with multilingual learners and their teachers.

## 1. Assets-Based Philosophy

ELs and their rich cultural and linguistic backgrounds must be recognized as a social and educational resource for everyone in a school community. Rather than looking at ELs as deficient and lacking knowledge and skills, I take a strengths-based approach to understanding what each child is able to do and how to support them all to reach their full potential. An asset-based philosophy of teaching is realized when you build on students' experiences and deeply connect instruction to students' and their families' lives. In this book, what students "can do" will be treated as exactly what the students are supposed to do. We cannot remediate what has not been built yet!

## 2. Individual Variations

As a group, ELs represent tremendous diversity, not only culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically but also based on how much prior knowledge and what type of academic, linguistic, and literacy skills they bring with them when they enter your classroom. Although language proficiency tests are commonly administered in each state to establish incoming students' proficiency levels, it is important to understand that students' trajectory and direction of development may be different in the four language domains. In speaking and listening, they may represent one level, and in reading and writing, a quite different one.

Although there are common patterns and predictable stages of language acquisition, ELs are unique individuals who move along the continuum of language learning at different rates. When you work with ELs, you notice that progress students make week to week, or month to month, or year to year will vary. In addition, ELs may appear to have skills associated with more than one language or literacy development stage.

## 3. Integrated Content, Language, and Literacy Instruction

Language and literacy learning for ELs may not exist in isolation from the academic curriculum (Heritage, Linquanti, and Walqui 2015). Academic language is recognized as the language used in schools to acquire new or deeper understanding of the core curriculum and to communicate that understanding to others (Gottlieb and Ernst-Slavit 2014). With this notion in mind, here I take

an approach to introducing strategies that may be used across grade levels and across content areas in support of developing academic language and literacy skills. Pacheco, Daniel, and Pray (2017) suggest that “language and content are not separate, and as students engage with different disciplines, they learn to use language practices valued in that discipline” (75). Language must be seen as a path to and an integral part of whatever content we teach (Hakuta, Santos, and Fang 2013).

## 4. Culturally and Linguistically Sustaining Instructional and Assessment Practices

In a seminal essay, Django Paris (2012) carefully differentiates between culturally responsive (Ladson-Billing 2011) or culturally proficient philosophies and argues that students need culturally and linguistically sustaining instruction and assessment. Teachers who engage in these practices not only recognize and respond to students’ languages, literacies, and cultural practices but also validate them through multimodal and multilingual learning opportunities. The goal is help student become successful in U.S. schools and society but not at the expense of sacrificing their existing cultural and linguistic competences.

## 5. Purposeful Interaction and Collaboration

Language and literacy development as well as content attainment require students to interact not just with the academic content and their teachers but with each other as well. In the social-constructivist tradition, I recognize that language does not thrive without ample opportunities to participate in meaningful learning activities that require collaboration. Throughout the book, I will emphasize the need for peer interaction, peer-supported learning, and authentic language use, one that organically includes home languages and nonverbal and multimodal representations.

## Research-Informed and Evidence-Based Practices

The collection of strategies presented in the five chapters is based on the most current research and evidence-based practices reported by leading researchers

and professional organizations. Especially influential are the Practice Guides published by Institute of Education Sciences (Baker et al. 2014) and the research and practitioner-oriented work published by TESOL International Association and WIDA Consortium. I also acknowledge and build upon the vast practitioner knowledge that is represented by the exceptional teacher and student work samples shared in this book.

## What You Will Find in This Book

I unpack the five levels of language acquisition one chapter at a time. I emphasize the common characteristics of learners at each stage and present a unique set of strategies to be used with students at each level.

Each chapter starts with two student vignettes that tell the stories of ELs from around the world who settle in the United States and attend kindergarten through grade 8. These composites were inspired by the many stories teachers shared with me over the a past few years.

The next major section of each chapter explores the characteristics of ELs on the target language proficiency level followed by the instructional practices and strategies that support each level. Strategies are organized into five strands—Visual Support, Learning by Doing, Oral Language Production, Reading Support, Writing Support—targeting the five proficiency levels.

Strategies under the Visual Support and Learning by Doing sections will encourage you to consistently supplement language, literacy, and academic content learning via multimodality. Oral Language Production sections will include a range of peer-supported, small-group learning opportunities that require authentic academic conversations. Saunders and O’Brien (2006) confirmed that “there is no controversy about the fundamental importance of English oral language development as part of the larger enterprise of educating ELLs” (14). Reading and Writing Support will include ways to enhance ELs’ literacy development.

To reach the broadest possible audience, the five levels of language proficiency are based on the TESOL framework, since it is similar to both WIDA’s and other existing frameworks.

1. *Starting*: being exposed to English with limited language production
2. *Emerging*: demonstrating receptive and emerging productive language skills

3. *Developing*: employing basic oral and written language skills with predictable error patterns
4. *Expanding*: employing more advanced oral and written language skills with fewer errors
5. *Bridging*: approximating native language proficiency.

Although the chapters are organized by language proficiency level, most strategies and recommendations may be adapted and transferred to other proficiency levels as well. Each chapter ends with revisiting the chapter opening vignettes and considering what the students featured in the vignettes would be able to do as they move on to the next proficiency level.

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Figure 5.23: Banchi and Bell’s Levels of Inquiry adapted from “The Many Levels of Inquiry” by Heather Banchi and Randy Bell in *Science and Children* (October 2008). Published by National Science Teachers Association. Used with permission from the publisher.

# Growing Language & Literacy



# Supporting

# STARTING

# Level English Learners

## Who Are *Starting* Level Students?

Being at the onset of this fascinating journey we formally refer to as *second language acquisition* can be exhilarating and exhausting. Let's meet two students, Cristela and Tamir, who are at the Starting level of second language acquisition. Although they represent different cultural, linguistic, and academic experiences and they attend different schools at different grade levels, they share at least one common characteristic: they are both just beginning to learn English as a new language. As you read their stories, look for cultural, linguistic, and academic assets they possess, and consider how to build upon them. Notice if you have had students with similar backgrounds and responses to schooling in the United States, and reflect on what you would do to help them get started with English. How would you welcome them to your classroom? How would you introduce new concepts and skills in a language yet to be acquired? The goal of this chapter is to offer some insights into first steps of language acquisition.

**The beginning  
is the half of  
every action.**

—GREEK PROVERB



# Cristela

Cristela came to the United States from El Salvador when she was five. She attended kindergarten in Texas before moving to Maryland, where she resides with her mother, uncle, and three cousins. Her mother does not read or write in Spanish or English; her uncle, who is more proficient in English, regularly helps with translating.

Cristela was placed in a first-grade cotaught classroom, where she had support from one of her Spanish-speaking classmates and from her newly found English-speaking friends as well. Cristela learned to follow the well-established routines with relative ease, perhaps because her classmates were eager to include her and help her throughout the day. Initially, Cristela nodded and smiled a lot, even when she did not quite understand what was happening around her. At other times she looked confused and approached her teachers or classmates speaking in Spanish. She enjoyed the songs and chants that were shared in the classroom, and after one of those morning meeting chats, she came out of her silent

period and began to repeat words and engage in simple conversations.

She received instructional support from the ELD (English language development) teacher three periods each day. There were eight other students in the classroom who spoke Cristela's native language, so Spanish was heard on the playground, during recess, in the lunchroom, and when Cristela worked in groups. Now five months after her arrival, she has begun to learn her letters. She still has difficulty with pronouncing some of the sounds in English, but she works diligently and giggles at times when she cannot quite get a sound right. It is easier for her to enunciate beginning word sounds than ending sounds. Cristela has learned several two- and three-word phrases to accomplish a task; "Can you help me?" is one of them.

Cristela does best when she describes the pictures she has drawn using patterned sentences. She is able to write "I see" sentences and even gets the initial sound of most words correctly using inventive spelling. Although she is still a Starting level student, she has made considerable growth in five short months. She is completing her homework at home with her uncle, who also shared that Cristela is now teaching her mom English!



## → STOP AND REFLECT ←

What were Cristela's greatest assets as a newcomer to the United States? What could her steady progress be attributed to? What would you do to help her further expand her language and literacy skills?

# Tamir

Tamir is a twelve-year-old boy from Syria, whose family has suffered greatly since the start of civil war in 2011. He lost his home and several close family members in Aleppo, Syria, when his neighborhood was bombed. Tamir's grandmother and uncle are unaccounted for, but the rest of the family fled to neighboring Jordan. Tamir's father, mother, two siblings, and cousin spent two years in a Zaatari refugee camp, where they lived in a trailer and food and medical supplies were scarce. Although Tamir did well in school and enjoyed reading, art, and studying in general prior to the civil war in Syria, he has not attended school regularly for quite a while. Tamir's father, who was an instructor at the Mamoun University for Science and Technology, tried to help him continue his education, but the lack of appropriate textbooks and school supplies limited the scope of their studying. By pointing to a map, Tamir was able to share that the family migrated through Turkey, Eastern Europe, and Germany on their long journey to the United States. The family was waiting for a visa to allow legal entrance to the United States for a number of years and went through several rounds of screening before finally they were admitted six months ago. Now in the United States, Tamir attends seventh grade in a newcomer

center, which is specially designed to welcome kindergarten to eighth-grade students and support them with the vast cultural and linguistic shifts they experience when they first arrive in the United States.

He understands basic commands and directions, especially when his teacher uses gestures and visual cues. Two months after his arrival, he has not yet spoken in English to any of his peers or teachers, but he pays more attention in class and does not always sit alone in the cafeteria any more. He has a buddy who taught him how to use the locker, and he quickly learned the routines of the day. He most enjoys art projects and his science classes, where he can watch his teachers show him what to do.

## → STOP AND REFLECT ←

Why is it important to understand the complex experiences that Tamir brings to school? In what ways should Tamir's teachers respond to the trauma that he has lived through? What assets can his teachers tap into? What would you do to help him thrive in middle school after he leaves the newcomer center?



## What's in a Name?

As the label suggests, Starting level students are in a unique position. When they enter the U.S. school system and are assessed for language proficiency, they may produce minimal, formulaic language (“thank you,” “hello”) in English or nothing at all, and they may not recognize what is being spoken or read to them. They may be able to identify some written words that are internationally known (for example, the stop sign, some logos such as Coca-Cola, names of common tech tools like iPad, and so on). These children have vast life and literacy experiences connected to another language and culture, so welcoming them as resources and assets in the school and classroom community is important.

Since many—though not all—of them are recent arrivals, they are likely to benefit from predictable routines and structures. With careful scaffolding, ample visual support, and background knowledge (that they either possess or you build about everyday topics or academic content), they can gain an overall understanding of what is presented in class. They begin to use words, phrases, and short sentences that they may have memorized as a chunk of language (e.g., “May I go to the bathroom?”) with increasing confidence. They are just starting to develop foundational language and literacy skills in English, hence the name *Starting*.

Some students may start out on the same level for the four key language domains, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing; others may have some receptive skills, gained through familiarity with popular songs, movies, or video games. Yet others might have lived all their lives in the United States but had limited exposure to formal English. Soon enough, you can observe that they are beginning to understand and process what is happening around them, what is being spoken or read to them. Make sure you observe all four language skills and notice how their receptive skills (especially listening) tend to develop more rapidly than the productive language skills (speaking and writing). The trajectory of certain literacy skills is also predictable: basic decoding may come earlier than developing reading comprehension skills, yet visuals help understand any lesson. See Figure 1.1 for an example of how Cydnie Jorgenson uses a Flow Map to review what to do when you go on a bear hunt. Previously, her first graders brainstormed what they would need to take on a hike, then they watched a video and sequenced steps of going on a bear hunt. Notice the Circle Map of “Things You Need to Go on a Hike” that she created in collaboration with her students. (See more on Thinking Maps in Chapter 4.)

Most of your students will demonstrate accelerated growth and rapid advancement to the next level called Emerging (see Chapter 2), whereas some will need additional time to reveal the progress they are making. Keep the following “mantra” in mind: “*lower is faster, higher is slower*” (Cook et al. 2008, 7). This research-informed principle suggests that English learners (ELs) in lower grades (younger students) and those who are at lower proficiency levels (Starting and Emerging, and even Developing) acquire language at faster rates, whereas upper elementary and middle school students or those at the Developing and Expanding levels or above will experience a slower rate of growth. Patience and perseverance—yours and theirs—are much-needed resources!



**Figure 1.1** Visually Enriched Classroom Environment

As you can see in Figure 1.2, the *Starting* level of language proficiency has many other labels depending on the theoretical framework you refer to, the state or country you live in, or the language development standards you use. Keep in mind that the descriptions for each category by the various professional organizations might not completely overlap.

Starting Level by Other Labels			
<b>TESOL</b>	<b>Hill and Miller (2014)</b>	<b>WIDA</b>	
Starting	Preproduction	Entering	
<b>ELPA (2016)</b>	<b>New York</b>	<b>California</b>	<b>Texas</b>
Emerging	Entering	Emerging	Beginner

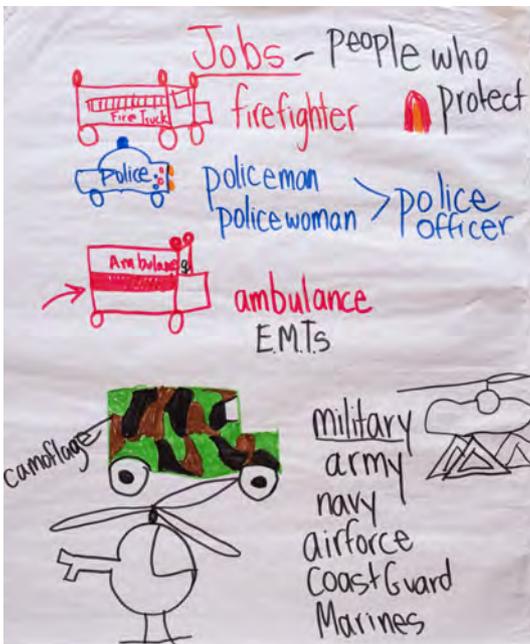
**Figure 1.2**

## What Can We Learn from Research?

The stage of language acquisition referred to as *Starting* in this book was first described as preproduction by Krashen and Terrell (1983). The preproduction stage (sometimes referred to as the silent period) may last up to six months, and it is often characterized by—as its name suggests—accumulating receptive language skills but not yet producing any or much in spoken or written form. Not all Starting level students may need several months to advance to the next level, so individual variances are to be expected. In fact, Gibbons (2006) considers this preverbal stage a challenging period that should not last longer than a month; through patterns and routines, most children will emerge from it relatively quickly. Similarly, Ohta (2001) reminds us that the “seemingly silent learner is neither passive nor disengaged, but is involved in an intrapersonal interactive process” (12). Most recently, Bligh (2014) has studied the silent period of young bilingual learners from a sociocultural perspective. Her study concludes with emphasizing the important role educators play in mediating and providing alternative modes of learning while embracing the learners’ private speech (internal thoughts and silent participation in learning). Figure 1.3 shows

how Leah Leonard engages her fourth- and fifth-grade Starting level students (who are also designated as SIFE, or students with interrupted formal education) to help them think about the different kinds of jobs that protect people.

Research has also well documented that Starting level students’ native languages are critical resources. An important finding from research on bilingualism is especially relevant for ELs who do not yet communicate in English. Cummins (2001) firmly believes that “to reject a child’s language in the school is to reject the child” (19). Similarly, Christensen (2010) suggests that “by bringing students’ languages from their homes into the classroom, we validate their culture and their history as topics worthy of study” (33). A key research-informed practice is to



**Figure 1.3** Visual Anchor Chart About Jobs

create a supportive environment for all students by valuing not just bilingualism in the individual but plurilingualism in the community and by making all students' languages visible and valued (Agirdag 2009). When students' home languages are used and affirmed in school, their emergent bilingual and bicultural identities are also affirmed, and the bridge to learning English is established. Finally, Goldenberg (2013) summarized key strategies that teachers may use to support English acquisition through home language strategies.

- Use cognates or words that look and sound similar as well as have the same or very similar meaning.
- Offer a brief explanation in the home language prior to instruction in English.
- Use the home language for previewing and reviewing the lesson (while the lesson is taught in English).
- Teach literacy or cognitive strategies in the home language, and provide opportunities to transfer those strategies when using English.

Many teachers pay close attention to building a multilingual environment in their classrooms. See Figure 1.4 for a selection of labels Elena Dokshansky co-created with her multilingual colleagues and her fourth-grade students to validate and support their multiple home languages and to help them learn key concepts.



**Figure 1.4** Multilingual Labels

## What Can Starting Level English Learners Do?

Although most *Starting* level students are newcomers to the United States, some, especially in kindergarten, may have grown up in rich cultural and linguistic contexts their parents provided in the home languages, and they might have had exposure to U.S. cultural and linguistic experiences. It is important to know whether your student is a U.S.-born child, someone who has only known the United States as his or her home, or whether the family had to uproot and leave behind everything the child knew and felt comfortable with. When you welcome ELs, put yourself in their shoes and consider—through the eyes of each child—what their first impressions are. If they don't understand your verbal input, they will certainly be more responsive to nonverbal cues: your body language, facial impressions, smile, gestures, tone of voice, and so on.

Let's flip the coin: What are your first impressions? What do you first notice about ELs at the Starting level? Tung (2013) cautions us not to view "ELL [English language learner] education as a problem, dilemma, achievement gap, or crisis"; instead, she urges us to "embrace ELLs as the very community members who, when well educated, will be the bicultural, bilingual leaders who improve our city neighborhoods and help us participate effectively in the global economy" (4). With this asset-based—rather than deficiency-oriented—philosophy, let's look at what positive expectations you can have for Starting level students, or as aptly put by WIDA (2012), what these students *can do*. These accomplishments are not expected on the very first day; they develop over the course of many days and weeks or even months.

When it comes to *listening*, you can expect students to begin to show evidence of comprehending English by doing the following:

- respond with gestures rather than words (nodding, shaking their heads, making hand gestures)
- respond nonverbally to simple, frequently used classroom commands ("Come here!")
- point to familiar objects around the classroom
- identify classmates by their names
- become familiar with the sounds and rhythms of the English language

- recognize everyday classroom language (words and short phrases) associated with daily routines (*homework, open your books, line up, do now*)
- point to words or phrases that have been previously introduced and are part of the environmental print in the classroom and school (*exit sign, homework*)
- recognize and respond to formulaic language (“Hello”; “Thank you”; “How are you?”).

Regarding *speaking* skills, you will notice that students initially respond and communicate nonverbally by nodding or gesturing, pointing to objects or visuals, or attempting to communicate in their native language. They will incrementally expand their English-speaking skills by doing the following:

- offer one-word answers such as “yes” or “no”
- translanguage or code-switch (using their native language with some English words) for communication in response to English prompts (see more discussion of translanguaging in Chapter 2)
- repeat words and phrases commonly used in familiar settings
- name objects found around the classroom and school by names
- call their teachers and classmates by name
- use formulaic language (“I don’t understand”; “Help me, please”)
- participate in short songs and chants that they are able to memorize (especially if there are hand gestures or motions).

When it comes to *reading*, students are likely to be nonreaders in English, yet they are anticipated to develop some foundational skills such as the following:

- read environmental print (exit sign, classroom labels, anchor chart headings)
- rely on visual support for understanding what is read aloud to them
- recognize letters
- make letter-sound connections

- recognize high-frequency words
- enjoy read-alouds that are well supported with visuals, hand motions, and other nonverbal supports
- use bilingual dictionaries to look up words.

Finally, in the area of *writing*, students may begin to do the following:

- form letters
- print frequently used words including their names and headings
- copy words
- draw pictures
- create illustrations or other graphic representations of their ideas with word labels in English
- write in their native language (if literate), and add labels or key words in English.



**Figure 1.5** Penguin Made out of Construction Paper

Amy Eckelmann's and Jessica Houston's Starting level kindergarten student loves to express his new learning through drawing, writing, and using artistic expressions. See Figure 1.5 and Figure 1.6 for his responses to the lesson about penguins. Notice how successfully he uses the various scaffolds available to him when he formulates one of his first sentences ever produced in writing.

Consider your expectations for *Starting* level students. They need meaningful exposure to English to begin to comprehend and respond to what is presented in your classroom. They are most likely to succeed and progress when support is given in *multiple* ways, *multiple* languages, and *multiple* modalities. For example, I would engage Cristela from the beginning of the chapter in all the languages available to her. She will build English language skills through guided reading lessons and purposeful classroom discussions that include Spanish and English language use. She can use simple sentences

to explain what she has read with the help of sentence starters and patterned language. To support Tamir, I would create a range of meaningful hands-on learning opportunities as well as ways for him to express his ideas artistically. Although he may not be able to use English at the seventh-grade level, I would need to give him every chance to think at grade level as he encounters complex content through visuals, digital media, and multilingual resources.

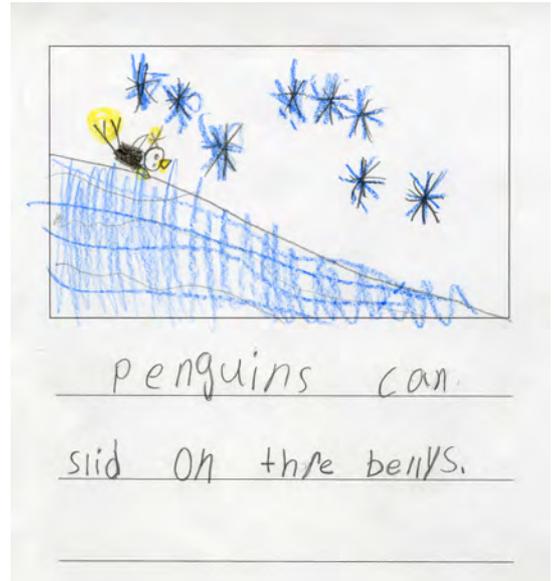
## What Practices Support Starting Level Students?

Starting level students will be best supported through teaching techniques that are multidimensional linguistically and academically. They need learning activities that allow them to be fully engaged by listening to others (both teachers and peers) talk about something they can relate to. When it comes to contributing to class, find ways for students to do so with minimal language use such as expressing themselves nonverbally, visually, artistically, through movement, and so on. If literate in the native language, encouraging students to use that language as a bridge to English is critical for cultural, social-emotional, and linguistic development.

When you have a student at the Starting level in your class, make sure that he or she feels welcome and included in the classroom and school community. Three practices to implement are (1) using what is familiar to your new students as a primary source of or link to learning, (2) establishing a peer support system, and (3) building basic comprehension and communicative language in English.

## Capitalize on Familiarity

Starting level students more than any other group of ELs must be made to feel that they belong and can learn English while their home cultures and native



**Figure 1.6** Illustration and Writing About Penguins

languages are also affirmed. Imagine that you are seven and move to a place where not too many people know the games and sports you have grown up with, books that your mother read aloud to you as bedtime stories, the customs and holidays that your family cherish, the songs or soft whispers that comforted you when you got hurt, or the food that nourished you. How would you adjust to a new environment?

One powerful way you can welcome newcomers is by making them feel a sense of belonging and incorporating resources into your teaching that will be familiar to them.

- Learn to say the child's name correctly.
- Learn some phrases such as "Welcome," "Glad to see you," "I am your teacher" in the child's home language. (Several apps, such as Google Translate, iTranslate, Papago, SayHi, Speak and Translate, Textgrabber, Waygo, are helpful to translate expressions and short sentences with increasing accuracy from English to just about any language.)
- Create a word wall that has some key concepts in every language represented in your classroom. Some powerful words might include *friendship*, *respect*, *learning*. See Figure 1.7 for a multilingual word wall (inspired by Naomi Barbour's similar color-coded word walls for high school ELs) with key vocabulary from the novel *Esmeralda Rising* (in Polish, Spanish, Chinese, and Russian).
- During recess, play music or provide games and activities that represent students' home lives and experiences.
- Use images that your Starting level students can recognize.
- When establishing classroom routines and procedures, incorporate print and visual cues.
- Teach words and phrases directly related to the class and school environment. Thorpe (2017) also suggests to "use the students' immediate surroundings to expand their vocabulary" (18). See Figures 1.8 and 1.9 for how Nidia Vaz-Correia's sixth-grade students learn about prepositions as the classroom comes alive with labels.



**Figure 1.7**  
Color-Coded  
Multilingual  
Word Wall



**Figure 1.8** Prepositions in the Classroom



**Figure 1.9** Prepositions in the Classroom

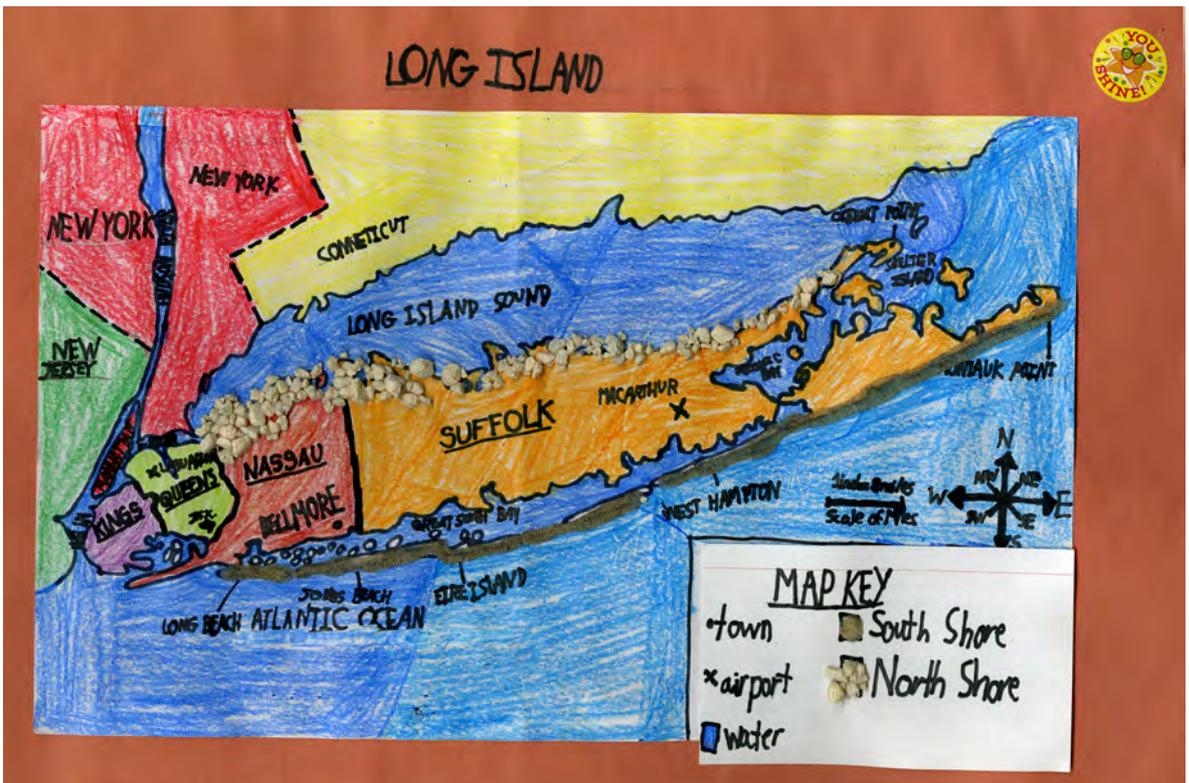
Moll (1992) has long recognized that all students come to school with tremendous knowledge derived from home- and community-based shared experiences that are often unrelated to the taught curriculum and skills needed for academic success. Moll calls this *funds of knowledge*. When the knowledge students accumulate at home or through their vast out-of-school experiences is connected to who they are, the term used is *funds of identity*. Esteban-Guitart and Moll (2014) suggest that “funds of knowledge—bodies of knowledge and skills that are essential for the well-being of an entire household—become funds of identity when people actively use them to define themselves” (31). When we recognize students’ funds of knowledge, we encourage them to feel valued by connecting their learning with the cultural knowledge they bring to school. Funds of knowledge and funds of identity are rich “tool kits” (73) created from the students’ lived experiences.

When a newcomer enters your classrooms, embrace what they know and who they are, and consider them as a major source of information. Use their experiences as a way to bridge to the curriculum, the new culture, and the language they are about to acquire (Helman, Rogers, Frederick, and Struck 2016). Consider all the ways you can help your ELs see aspects of their out-of-school cultural and linguistic experiences reflected in the school environment and the learning activities. Some of these suggestions impact the larger school community, so your role might be to advocate on behalf of ELs to ensure the following:

- Have signs around the building welcoming students and families in all the languages spoken in the community.
- Prepare information booklets or family handbooks available in all the languages spoken in the community.
- Make sure school staff feel comfortable greeting and interacting with adults who do not speak English well, using cues and resources that illustrate frequently communicated processes.
- Be sure that ELs see their own and their classmates’ work written in multiple languages on bulletin boards.
- Make books and digital media available in languages other than English.
- Make interpreters available on site or on call as needed to support family meetings.

- Have student ambassadors who welcome new students into the school community, offer tours of the building, and join the new student at recess and other unstructured times (Fisher and Frey 2017).
- Let students tell their personal stories, make connections to text—both fiction and nonfiction—and make sense of their way of life at home.

Replicate or expand some of these school-wide practices, and welcome your beginners with multilingual signs and resources in your classroom. English-speaking students may create welcome cards or special placemats that include key sentences or phrases and visuals students can point to. See Figure 1.10 for a three-dimensional map that a fifth grader created to help his classmates better understand the “lay of the land.”



**Figure 1.10** Three-Dimensional Map of Long Island, New York

A newcomer kit or welcome kit may be a helpful source with some key information (Colorín Colorado n.d.; Law and Eckes 2010).

- how to navigate the school: a colorful map that shows where to find some key places (bathrooms, nurse’s room, cafeteria)
- how to find the child’s classroom: classroom location and teacher’s name and phone number or email
- routines regarding arrival and dismissal—especially if bussing is involved and ELs need to find their way to the correct school bus
- routines and expectations about snack and lunchtime
- a list of key community-based organizations and resources such as names and numbers of other families who have volunteered to offer help
- a basic English dictionary of key words, phrases, and sentences translated into the child’s home language.

See a newcomer kit table of contents by Michelle D’Errico in Figure 1.11 and a section from Gabriel Ramos’ newcomer kit in Figure 1.12. Also see visual guidance to the school section in Sofia Rombolakis’ newcomer toolkit in Figure 1.13.

## Establish a Peer Support System

When you have a new student in your classroom, regardless of the age or background, that child is likely to face some challenges as he or she begins to adjust to the new school and classroom environment, accept the changes in routines, understand the social and academic expectations, adhere to the written and unwritten rules of, make new friends, and build trust in relationships with both peers and adults. When your new student is an EL, the situation is exacerbated by cultural and linguistic differences, so an important first step is to help the child develop a sense of belonging. Fisher and Frey (2017) suggest that you seat new students so they “maximize the connections [they] can make with peers” (83). Building relationships one classmate at a time can

### For the Parents/Para los Padres

- Page/Página 3 Welcome Letter/Carta de Bienvenida
- Page/Página 4 Meet the Teacher/Conoce al Maestro
- Page/Página 5 Supply List/Lista de Útiles
- Page/Página 6 Lunch Information/Información del Almuerzo
- Page/Página 7 SCOPE Program/Programa del SCOPE
- Page/Página 8 School Calendar/Calendario Escolar
- Page/Página 9 Important Phone Numbers/Números Telefónicos Importa
- Page/Página 10 Busing/El Autobús
- Page/Página 11 Community Info & Resources/Información y Recursos
- Page/Página 12 Student Emergency Card/Tarjeta de Emergencia

### For the Student/Para el Estudiante

- Page/Página 13 Meet the Teacher/Conoce al Maestro
- Page/Página 14 Other Teachers/Otros Maestros
- Page/Página 15 My School Map/Mi Mapa Escolar
- Page/Página 16 My Classroom Map/Mi Mapa de Aula
- Page/Página 17 My Playground Map/Mi Mapa de Juegos Infantiles
- Page/Página 18-27 Our Class Schedule/Nuestro Horario de Clase
- Page/Página 28-32 Vocabulary Cards/Tarjeta de Vocabulario
- Page/Página 33 Online Resources/Recursos en Línea

**Figure 1.11 Newcomer Kit Table of Contents**

## VOCABULARY | VOCABULARIO

### CLASSROOM EXPRESSIONS - TEACHER | EXPRESIONES DE LA CLASE - PROFESOR

Sit down	Siéntense or Siéntate
Raise your hand	Levanten or Levanta la mano
Take out (your homework, iPad, etc)	Saquen or Saca (la tarea, su iPad, etc)
A volunteer to...	Un voluntario para...
Try	Try
Ready?	¿Listos?
Close (the door, the window, etc)	Cierren or Cierra (la puerta, la ventana)
Open (the door, the window, etc)	Abran or Abre (la puerta, la ventana)

### CLASSROOM EXPRESSIONS - STUDENT | EXPRESIONES DE LA CLASE - ALUMNO

How do you say....?	¿Cómo se dice...?
How do you spell...?	¿Cómo se escribe...?
What does ... mean?	¿Qué quiere decir...?
Slower, please.	Más lento, por favor.
Can you explain, please?	¿Puedes explicar en inglés, por favor?
Can I go to the bathroom?	¿Puedo ir al baño?
Can I get a drink of water?	¿Puedo beber agua?
I don't know.	No sé.

**Figure 1.12 A Bilingual Page from a Newcomer Kit**

## Welcome to 4<sup>th</sup> Grade!

Ms. Rombolakis

hello **fourth**  
GRADE

I am your fourth grade teacher, Ms. Rombolakis. This year you will learn about various different topics, as well as develop your reading and math skills! Over the course of this school year we will learn about Native American tribes, their culture, and their natural resources. We will learn to create museum exhibits and become incredible researchers! We will also become very strong mathematicians. We will be learning about angles, double digit multiplication, long division, and so much more! I look forward to having you in my class this year, and I am excited for us to all work together and learn as much as we can.



Soy su maestra de cuarto grado, la Sra. Rombolakis. Este año aprenderás sobre varios temas diferentes, y también desarrollarás tus habilidades de lectura y matemáticas! En el transcurso de este año escolar, aprenderemos sobre las tribus nativas, su cultura y sus recursos naturales. ¡Aprenderemos a crear exhibiciones de museos y nos convertiremos en increíbles investigadores! También nos convertiremos en matemáticos muy fuertes. Aprenderemos sobre ángulos, multiplicación de dos dígitos, división larga y mucho más. Espero tenerte en mi clase este año, y estoy entusiasmado de que trabajemos juntos y aprendamos todo lo que podamos.

### Important Notes | Puntos Importantes:

E-mail: [srombolakis@ps171.org](mailto:srombolakis@ps171.org) Correo Electrónico: [srombolakis@ps171.org](mailto:srombolakis@ps171.org)  
Phone Number: (212) 860-5801 Número de Teléfono: (212) 860-5801  
Extra Help: Wednesday & Thursday 2:20PM-3:00PM Ayuda Extra: Miércoles y Jueves 2:20PM-3:00PM

**Figure 1.13 Helping Newcomers Learn About Their New Teacher and New School**

## Welcome ! | ¡Bienvenido!

Welcome to P.S.171! We are very excited to welcome you into our school community. Below you will find our school website. On our website you have access to the contact information of the school staff, class websites, helpful resources for students to access, and important information for parents. Feel free to familiarize yourself with the website.

Bienvenido a P.S.171! Estamos muy emocionados de darle la bienvenida a nuestra comunidad escolar. A continuación encontrará nuestro sitio web de la escuela. En nuestro sitio web tiene acceso a la información de contacto del personal de la escuela, los sitios web de las clases, los recursos útiles para el acceso de los alumnos y la información importante para los padres. Siéntase libre de familiarizarse con el sitio web.



School Website | Sitio Web

[www.ps171.org](http://www.ps171.org)

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