

# 7

## ***Learning Language, Learning Through Language, and Learning About Language Developing an Integrated Curriculum***

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*What ESL learners are entitled to is the best available environment for language and cognitive development. Given the language-rich, child-centred quality of kindergarten and primary [elementary] practice . . . there is little doubt that in the early years of schooling, the mainstream classroom forms the best basis for this.*  
John Clegg, *Mainstreaming ESL: Case Studies in Integrating ESL Students into the Mainstream Curriculum*

### **The Curriculum: A Context for Language Learning**

This chapter brings together the ideas in this book and discusses some of the ways in which ESL teaching can be integrated into the regular classroom. Part of the title of the chapter comes from a paper by Michael Halliday entitled “Three Aspects of Children’s Language Development: Learning Language, Learning Through Language and Learning About Language.” These three aspects of language development are brought together in a classroom program that integrates curriculum and language learning.

In the past, ESL teaching was often quite separate from whatever was going on in the mainstream curriculum. Students followed a special program, for which they were usually withdrawn from their classroom on a regular basis. This language program was often organized around sets of grammatical structures (e.g., the present continuous tense, the past tense, the present tense, prepositions, etc.) or around language functions (e.g., generalizing, classifying, hypothesizing, expressing time, expressing location, etc.). Such approaches rely on the deliberate creation of contexts for using the language. For example, to practice the kinds of conditional language associated with hypothesizing (such as *if we were . . . we would . . .*), a typical exercise might require children to think of six items they would need if they were stranded on an island (the

assumption being that this would elicit language such as *we would need . . . we would take . . .*). While this may seem a communicative language learning task, in that the language is being used for some purpose, there may be no rationale as to why this is a particularly relevant or meaningful piece of language for children to be learning at that point in time. Nor may the task itself have anything to do with the particular subject learning in which children are engaged back in their regular classroom. And often in programs designed simply to teach language, there may be a sequence of such exercises where the somewhat artificial contexts and random choice of language items bear no relationship with each other, nor to what is being learned at that time in the mainstream curriculum.

Of course, for some newly arrived children, a short daily withdrawal program may still be valuable, provided that the focus language in these classes is related to the mainstream curriculum. Students new to the school and to English, or who are very shy or traumatized, may gain confidence and become familiar and comfortable with their new surroundings more easily in this way. It may also be less threatening for them to learn in a small group rather than in a whole class, and they will have many more opportunities to interact on a one-to-one basis with a teacher.

However, this chapter is based on the view that for most ESL learners, the regular classroom offers the best opportunity to learn a second language. In particular, the regular classroom provides a cultural and situational context for a focus on those aspects of the second language most relevant to curriculum learning.

### ***Why Integrate?***

Language teaching methodologies have generally accepted the notion that language teaching is more effective when learners are presented with meaningful language in context, and the integration of ESL learning with curriculum content is now broadly accepted as supportive of second language learning (Short 1993). There are a number of reasons why this is the approach taken here.

- First, the integration of language and content is consistent with the notion that language is learned through meaningful use in a variety of contexts. The subject matter of the curriculum provides those contexts, and thus a rationale for what language to teach. From a language-teaching perspective, then, the curriculum can be seen as providing authentic contexts for the development of subject-specific genres and registers. In short, an integrated program takes a functional approach to language and places its teaching focus on language as the medium of learning, rather than on language as something separate from content.
- Second, as discussed in Chapter 1, there is evidence that it can take between five and seven years for ESL students to match their English-speaking peers in the effective use of the academic registers of school. Clearly, if this is the case, concurrent teaching and learning of both subject matter and language is a way

of speeding up this process, and helping to ensure that children's classroom time is spent as usefully as possible.

- Third, nonintegrated approaches—instruction in language alone—is usually insufficient to enable children to succeed in mainstream studies (Adamson 1993; Richards and Hurley 1990; Collier 1995). As we noted earlier, if children are following a separate ESL program, there is a risk that there will be little relationship between the language being presented in the language class, and the language required for children to access and participate in curriculum learning. Since language is best learned in the service of other learning, the mainstream curriculum is an obvious source for language development: as one educator puts it, “Why go to the trouble of artificially recreating the mainstream classroom [in withdrawal classes] when the real thing is available next door?” (Clegg 1996, 10).
- In addition, situating language teaching within a curriculum area has the potential to support both language and curriculum learning, in a reciprocal way. With a dual content-language focus, there is likely to be a continuous recycling of concepts, grammar, or vocabulary associated with particular curriculum knowledge. As we saw in Chapter 5, prior knowledge or familiarity with a topic greatly facilitates language comprehension and language learning. Equally, language-based tasks in a subject area can effectively recycle particular curriculum concepts and knowledge in the process of focusing on relevant text types, registers, grammar, and vocabulary. In other words, “the curriculum is the hook on which to hang language development and vice versa” (Clegg 1996, 15).
- Finally, it is important to recognize the benefits to all students of a culturally and linguistically diverse classroom, and a culturally inclusive and language-aware curriculum. As Clegg (1996) points out, “the language-rich diet of an ESL group can turn out to be nourishing for the whole mainstream class. It can help all the children use language for learning in ways which were not previously available to them” (12). We should recognize that separate provision for ESL students impoverishes the school as a whole: it reinforces monoculturalism and puts the school at odds with the reality of the culturally diverse society in which it is situated. In the world of the twenty-first century, all children will increasingly need, as one writer puts it, to “navigate difference.”

As we pointed out in Chapter 1, however, merely placing children in the mainstream classroom does not ensure they will learn the language of instruction. Good content teaching is not necessarily good language teaching, and at the same time, subject teaching must go beyond the concerns of the language specialist. An integrated program takes a functional approach to language, systematically relating it to the uses of language in the curriculum, so that curriculum topics will have both subject and specific language aims. When this occurs, the curriculum can provide an authentic context for meaningful and purposeful language use. There are a range of ways in which integration has been interpreted and organized (for excellent summaries of

these, see Davison and Williams 2001, 58–59; and Clegg 1996, 22). This chapter offers a further example of how this integration can occur.

### **Integrating Language and Subject Learning: What Do We Need to Know First?**

In this section we'll look at the kind of information that needs to be gathered prior to actual classroom planning. There are two sets of information that form the basis for the planning of a program that integrates second language learning and curriculum learning. They are the responses to these two questions:

- What are the language demands of the curriculum?
- What do children currently know about language, and what are their language-learning needs?

The first question requires “finding the language” in the subjects and topics that children are studying. The second requires finding out about children’s current language abilities. In the following two sections, we’ll look at each of these areas.

#### ***Finding the Language in the Curriculum***

First, think about the topics or units of work that you are currently working with in your classroom program. Examples of “topics” or “unit of work” could be: our neighborhood, small creatures, electricity, the water cycle, a local issue, producing a class paper, making a school garden, symmetry and patterning, designing a kite.

Most teachers are accustomed to thinking about planning for subject learning in terms of the content, tasks, and resources they will use, and program objectives are frequently thought of in terms of subject learning. Although most teachers are aware of the importance of language in the classroom, it is often not explicitly planned for across the curriculum. The temptation is to look “through” language to the content. Figure 7–1 provides a series of questions designed to help you think about the *language* that is integral to a particular curriculum topic. These questions are not intended to be definitive. Nor is it suggested that you take account of every question in every unit of work. Rather, they are intended to prompt you to think about your program through the “lens” of language, to help you hold language up to the light, to look *at* it rather than *through* it.

The questions aim to do two things. First, they aim to help you identify the language demands of a particular topic or area of study, and to determine what language children would need to know in order to participate in learning in that curriculum topic. Second, they aim to help you identify if and where opportunities for language development are being missed, such as to draw attention to a missed opportunity to develop listening skills. Each set of questions is headed with a reference to the chapter

<i>See Chapters 2 &amp; 3</i>	<i>See Chapter 6</i>	<i>See Chapter 5</i>	<i>See Chapter 4</i>	<i>See Chapters 2, 3, &amp; 5</i>	<i>See Chapters 2, 3, &amp; 5</i>
<p>What spoken language demands will there be?</p> <p>If there are currently not many opportunities for spoken language, where can oral tasks be included?</p>	<p>What listening tasks will there be?</p> <p>What kind of listening do they involve: one-way? two-way? interpersonal? transactional?</p> <p>If there are currently not many listening tasks, what specific listening activities could be included?</p>	<p>What texts will students be reading?</p> <p>What are the possible linguistic and cultural barriers students may encounter?</p> <p>How can texts be made accessible to students?</p> <p>Do reading tasks aim to increase readers' reading strategies, and students' knowledge about language?</p> <p>If there are few reading texts, are there others that could be included?</p>	<p>What are the written text types that will occur, or what text types could be included?</p> <p>What is the schematic structure of these text types?</p> <p>What kind of connectives occur in these text types?</p> <p>If there are few written tasks, what text types would be relevant and could be included?</p>	<p>What aspects of grammar (e.g., tense) does the topic require students to use?</p>	<p>What specific vocabulary does the topic require students to know?</p>

FIGURE 7-1. *Finding the Language in the Curriculum*

in which the particular issues are dealt with. You may wish to add other questions of your own.

Figure 7–2 is a worked example of the kinds of responses you might make to these questions. The topic is “A Local Issue,” and it is adapted from a program from Creenaune and Rowles (1996). Creenaune and Rowles give the following as examples of local issues that have relevance to students’ lives: aircraft noise under a flight path, a proposed local development in an environmentally sensitive area, demolition of a historic building, the preservation of an endangered species, the threatened closure of an important community service or facility, a campaign to improve local facilities for young people. Creenaune and Rowles include the following objectives for this unit:

after thorough examination of all the arguments surrounding an issue, students will be encouraged to develop an informed position with supporting arguments and express this position in authentic forums, for example, writing to a newspaper or to local politicians, speaking at a school assembly or producing articles for the school magazine. (43–47)

In Figure 7–2, the left-hand column is a selection of the planned teaching and learning activities that would be included in such a topic. (Details of the particular issue have not been included since this would depend on the local situation.) The right-hand column “unpacks” these to identify what language knowledge and use is required in order to carry them out. It thus represents a “language inventory”—the language that is integral to planned teaching activities—and answers the first of the questions raised earlier: what are the language demands of the curriculum?

We will return to this language inventory later. At this point, let’s turn to the second major question: what do children currently know about language, and what are their language-learning needs? This is the subject of the next section.

### ***Finding Out About Children’s Language***

The second set of information focuses on the current language abilities of the children—what they are already able to do with language and the areas in which they need help. This is the information that effective language assessment practices provide. Central to the notion of assessment here is the principle that the information it provides should be used to inform subsequent teaching and learning activities, and that it is an ongoing process that occurs in the context of the everyday activities of the classroom. It aims ultimately to support learning, not—as may be a risk with standardized tests—to “legitimize the location of the ‘problem’ within students” (Cummins 2000).

Though there may be a place at times for the kind of information that standardized tests are able to provide, probably the most useful language assessment for teachers is that which provides information about children’s mastery of the language of the classroom, in particular when it indicates the areas in which they currently require

Planned Teaching and Learning Activities	Finding the Language
Brainstorm what children know about issue and record ideas	Vocabulary for topic
Get information: write to key people or organizations to request information	Letters of request Use of politeness forms: <i>We would be grateful if . . .</i> <i>Could you please . . .</i>
Collect and read pamphlets, newspaper articles, or other published material and make notes	Skimming and scanning skills Summarizing Notetaking
Visit site/display areas and write a recount of the visit	Writing a recount Use of past tense Use of appropriate connectives (of time): <i>first, next, afterwards, finally</i>
Interview or invite key people to the school to speak about the issue from their perspective	Formulating questions for interview Asking the interviewee questions in an appropriate manner
Share all information with peers	Giving an oral report Listening skills: listening for key information
Examine similarities and differences between viewpoints of stakeholders	Use of comparison and contrast: <i>X argues . . . whereas Y argues . . .</i>
Small-group class discussions	Voicing disagreement politely: <i>I don't fully agree with you, in my opinion</i> Presenting opinions: <i>I'd like to say, I'd like to add, in my opinion</i> Using appropriate connectives for supporting arguments: <i>first, second, finally</i>
Address school assembly or other classes about the issue	Presenting an oral report <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Using appropriate schematic structure</li> <li>• Presentation skills</li> </ul>
Write letters to the local newspaper or articles for school newspaper presenting opinions	Writing an argument Use of appropriate schematic structure Use of appropriate connectives for presenting arguments: <i>first, second, therefore, in conclusion</i>

FIGURE 7-2. A Significant Local Issue: A Language “Inventory”

support. This kind of assessment is intended to *be ongoing and formative*, not to “place” children in relation to each other or be used as a summative “test.” The aim is to provide you with useful information about the current language development of children that in turn will feed into subsequent teaching and learning activities. Such ongoing assessment is by its nature context specific, and so it will indicate to the teacher the level and kind of scaffolding that is most relevant for particular tasks.

Ongoing classroom assessment can occur in a number of ways, many of them informal, and many of which you probably already use. They include:

- Your observation of how children work and interact with others, such as how far they make use of environmental print around the room, their level of interest in reading and writing, and how confident they are in speaking.
- Your interaction with individual children, such as talking with them about how they have gone about solving a problem, listening to how they have reasoned a math task, discussing their understanding of what they are reading.
- The outcomes of listening, reading, speaking, and writing tasks.
- Portfolios of work.
- Children’s own self-assessments.

All of these are valuable in helping build up a profile of a learner’s language use.

It is also useful to carry out more systematic analyses of the language children actually produce when they speak and write; this information is especially important for the planning of an integrated program. The section on assessment in Chapter 4 is an example of how this can be done. It describes how children’s writing can be assessed against criteria that are specific to a particular text type. In the same way, any learning task in which children are involved—including every activity described in the Glossary—can simultaneously be an assessment task. Here are two further examples of how regular classroom activities can be used as a means of assessing what children are able to do and where they need support. (For additional examples, see Gibbons 1992.)

#### ASSESSMENT TASK FOR SPEAKING: PAIRED PROBLEM SOLVING

One activity described in Chapter 2 was **paired problem solving**. The task requires students to work in pairs to solve one of two problems (the examples given in Chapter 2 were to design a paper boat that would keep afloat twenty marbles, and to design a mobile). Having come to a solution, two pairs cross-question each other about their solutions to their respective problems, prior to solving the second problem themselves. If this activity were also to be used as an assessment task, note that the aim would be to focus on the *language* involved in doing the task, rather than on the “best” solution to the problem. With this in mind, let’s consider the kinds of criteria you may want to apply to evaluate what counts as a “successful” performance. (Note that assessment of children’s spoken language is easier if the talk is audiotaped. This can also be played back to children as a way of having them reflect on their own performance.)

First, think about what this task requires children to be able to do, in linguistic terms. It requires them to describe their problem, and then to report their solution. The reporting will require them to use the past tense, to use appropriate vocabulary (e.g., *tore, broke, fell apart, sunk, floated, flat-bottomed, pointed*), and to give reasons for the various solutions they have tried (e.g., *We did that because we thought . . .*). The task will also require children to ask appropriate questions about the other pair's problem and solution (e.g., *So, what happened? What did you do then?*). And, as a significant part of the task, it will require them to give advice appropriately (e.g., *You could . . . Have you tried . . . -ing? Do you think you should have . . . ? Perhaps it would be better if . . .*). And it is likely that they will also need to be able to acknowledge this advice (e.g., *That's a good idea; We could try that; No, I don't think that will work because . . .*).

Of course, what you are doing when you "unpack" a task in this way is also an example of "finding the language in the curriculum," and you may wish to take account of this in your classroom planning. Used as an assessment procedure, these examples of task-related language can be translated into a set of criteria by which a learner's language can be assessed. Figure 7-3 is a worked example of this and illustrates how one child (Mario) was assessed.

At the same time, it's important to note that if a learner doesn't fulfill one of these criteria, it does not necessarily indicate an *inability* to use language in this way. For example, let's say the child did not offer advice to the other pair. This only shows that, in this context, the learner didn't indicate whether or not he or she could offer advice. Perhaps the child simply chose not to. So it is important not to overgeneralize about learners' abilities on the basis of context-specific tasks.

On the other hand, if assessment is an ongoing process and takes into account a range of contexts in which learners use language, such assessment procedures gradually build up to form a profile of how learners use language in the classroom. The assessment in Figure 7-3 indicates that Mario was able to report what he and his partner did, but had difficulty in using the kind of modulation by which English speakers offer advice: *you could . . . it might be better if . . . maybe you should . . .* and so forth.

#### ASSESSMENT TASK FOR READING: CLOZE EXERCISE

There are many ways to assess reading, and many resources and books available on the subject. It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss reading assessment in detail. Popular ways of assessing children include using anecdotal records, miscue analysis, reading conferences, children's own reading logs, audiotapes of oral readings, teacher-student conferences, and retelling or rewriting what has been read (see Earnest Garcia 1994). As in the previous example for assessing spoken language, the purpose here is simply to show how a regular teaching activity can be used for the purpose of assessment.

Since it has been mentioned several times in this book, we will look at how **cloze** activities can be used in this way. Cloze tests were originally developed to reflect the theory that reading entails the prediction of what will come next, and were discussed as teaching (rather than testing) procedures in Chapter 5, and in the Glossary. Again,

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>NAME:</b> Mario
<i>Was the learner able to . . .</i>	<b>Comments</b>
Describe the problem	<i>Was able to do this quite clearly.</i>
Report their solution: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Use the past tense</li> <li>- Use appropriate vocabulary</li> <li>- Give reasons for actions</li> </ul>	<p><i>Made some past tense mistakes (“try,” “putted”) but meaning was clear. Vocabulary limited but showed good strategies for making meaning—“boat was not point at bottom” (flat-bottomed?)</i></p> <p><i>Not demonstrated</i></p>
Ask appropriate questions	<p><i>Asked mainly WH questions.</i></p> <p><i>Question forms sometimes inaccurate—“how you did?” “why you do that?”</i></p>
Offer advice appropriately	<i>Used “maybe” throughout—“maybe you try like this.” No other use of modality (e.g., you could have . . .). Overall communicated this well.</i>
Acknowledge advice	<i>Not demonstrated</i>
Other comments	<p><i>Mario participated very actively in this activity—much more confident now—maybe because he felt he really had something to say.</i></p> <p><i>Focus LANGUAGE AREAS: tense, question forms, modality</i></p>

FIGURE 7-3. Example of Task Assessment: Shared Problem Solving

while regular deletions throughout the text (for example, every sixth or seventh word) may give general information about a reader's overall understanding of the text, a well-constructed cloze with selective deletions can give you more specific information about children's reading strategies. It can tell you about what kinds of strategies children are using to gain meaning from text, such as using backward referencing (using the preceding text to find a clue) or forward referencing (looking ahead in the text to find a clue). Children who are unable to use backward and forward referencing will read word by word, and they will probably be unable to carry meaning within or across sentences.

Cloze activities can also be used to focus on whether a learner understands critical grammatical markers, such as connectives that link ideas and signal the logical development of a text. A cloze exercise based on an argument or discussion text (see Chapter 4) could be used for this purpose. In this case, grammatical deletions would include the logical connectives in the text, such as *first*, *second*, *finally*, *on the other hand*, *however*, *therefore*.

A few words of warning, however. First, as we have seen, the process of reading depends greatly on the reader's current level of knowledge of the topic, and familiarity with the type of genre. If your aim is to assess a child's comprehension ability to process text, then ensure that for assessment purposes the topic and genre are familiar ones, so that as far as possible you are focusing on the child's linguistic understandings (rather than on possible "gaps" in the child's cultural or world knowledge in relation to the text). Second, remember that at least the first and last sentences of a cloze exercise should be complete, since without these the reader has an unrealistic reading task, in being required to understand a text that lacks a clear context.

### Planning a Unit That Integrates Language and Curriculum Learning

At this point you have made a "language inventory" of what the topic will require children to be able to do—the linguistic demands that will be made on them—and you have a considerable amount of information through ongoing formal and informal assessment about what children are currently able to do (including some of the areas where they still need support). These two sets of information form the basis of an integrated program. Before discussing its development, I will reiterate some key pedagogical principles for promoting second language learners' linguistic and cognitive development, and the growth of critical literacy skills.

Cummins (2000) suggests three interrelated areas as critical to such a pedagogy:

1. *A focus on meaning.* This requires input, or the language that children listen to or read, to be comprehensible. It also includes the development of critical literacy.
2. *A focus on language.* This includes the development of children's awareness of language forms and uses, and the ability to critically analyze these.

3. *A focus on use.* This involves using language to transform what has been learned, through generating new knowledge, creating literature and art, and acting on social realities.

Integral to each of these—and congruent with the socio-cultural view of learning that informs the discussion throughout this book—is the acknowledgment that student learning is inseparable from the interactions between teachers and learners.

### ***A Framework for Planning***

The framework for planning an integrated unit takes these principles into account, and it also draws on the earlier discussion relating to the language demands of the curriculum and the language needs of the children (see Figure 7–4). The framework is intended to provide an ESL focus to a mainstream program, and to be a supplement to your normal program, not to replace it. In addition, it is intended to fulfill two purposes:

1. To facilitate joint planning, where two teachers—an ESL teacher and a classroom teacher—plan and/or teach a class collaboratively.
2. To help a classroom teacher who is working alone to plan systematically for the needs of the second language learners in her class.

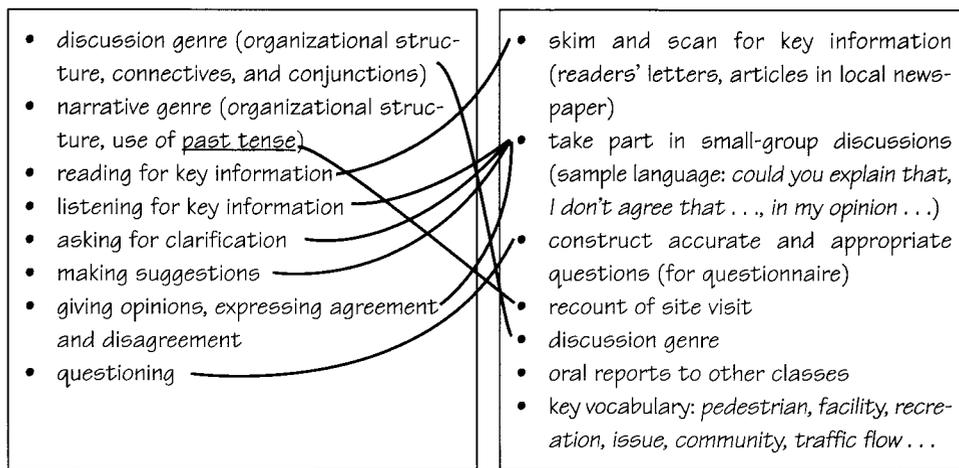
The framework in Figure 7–4 has been partially completed for an upper elementary class studying the “local issue” topic discussed earlier. (For a similar example with a younger class, see Gibbons 1993.) The particular issue for this class was centered around the local park, which also had a swimming pool that many of the children visited regularly. A proposal had been put forward by the local council to develop part of the park space as a multistory parking lot to serve the local shopping area. Community feeling was split over this, and the local newspaper at the time was a source for letters both supporting and opposing the development, and for articles and editorials. Other material included a plan of the proposed development at the local library, and the local council newsletter.

#### BOXES A AND B: STUDENT NEEDS AND CURRICULUM DEMANDS

Box A summarizes the information about the students gained from ongoing assessment, and Box B represents the language inventory for the topic (see Figure 7–2 for a summary of the planned teaching activities). It should be noted, though, that not all the needs identified through assessment can be addressed at once! Indeed, the nature of the topic may mean that it is not the appropriate vehicle to focus on some language areas. For example, although narrative structure has been identified in this class as an area of difficulty, this topic is probably not going to provide an authentic context for that to be a relevant language focus at this point in time. Integration cannot be forced:

A. Students' Language Development Needs

B. Language Inventory (language demands of the topic)



C. Activities to Develop Focus Language

- Joint construction of recount (based on site visit), focus on past tense, time connectives, vocabulary
- Wallpaper Brainstorm to elicit ideas for and against development
- Jigsaw Reading, using range of letters to local newspaper, focus on skimming and scanning for key information
- Dictogloss (use simplified editorial as text)
- Hot Seat: visitor from five years in the future, advantages and disadvantages of development
- Find the Difference (for lower-level ESL students), pictures before and after development, to focus on vocabulary
- Curriculum Cycle for teaching discussion genre (use cloze, text reconstruction, and split dictation to model the text type)

D. Evaluation

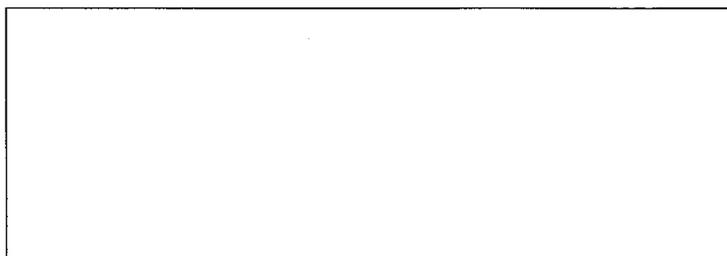


FIGURE 7-4. A Framework for the Integration of Language and Content

if a particular text type or grammatical item has not been identified in your language inventory, it is better to address that particular area of language in another unit. It is likely, however, that the “local issue” topic will provide authentic contexts for some of the areas identified as children’s language learning needs. Links have been drawn to indicate these areas of “match.” They include:

- The structure of written discussions.
- The use of connectives and conjunctions within this text type (presenting an opinion in a letter to the editor of a local paper).
- Skimming and scanning skills (in reading relevant pamphlets or informational material).
- Summarizing information.
- Listening for key information.
- Giving opinions and expressing agreement and disagreement.

These areas, then, have been chosen as the language focuses for this topic because they are both relevant to the needs of the children *and* congruent with the language demands of the topic.

#### BOX C: DEVELOPING THE FOCUS LANGUAGE

The next decision is how to develop this focus language. Box C lists the particular language tasks that are intended to model the focus language and to give opportunities for students to use it. All the activities listed here have been introduced throughout the book and are listed in the Glossary, but you will probably be able to think of others. These activities are the means by which the focus language is translated into meaningful teaching and learning activities that are relevant both to the language needs of the students *and* to the topic being studied.

Box C thus represents:

- The scaffolding by which learners are helped to access the language identified in Box B.
- The means by which teachers can respond to some of the language needs identified in Box A, in the context of the mainstream curriculum.
- The language focus for the unit.

#### BOX D: EVALUATION

Box D is the evaluation of the unit. There may be many things you wish to evaluate: for example, the resources used, students’ enjoyment of the unit, their ability to work collaboratively, and the relevance and design of the tasks, as well as what students have

learned. Again, the framework is not intended to replace this broad evaluation, simply to add to it. The information Box D contains will reflect the initial identification of children's language-learning needs and the demands of the curriculum—that is, it relates to what has been identified in Box A and Box B. Broadly, in this unit, it will address questions such as whether or not the children are now better able to:

- Structure an argument.
- Use appropriate connectives to present ideas in an argument.
- Skim and scan for information.
- Summarize information.

Consider also the issues raised in Chapter 1 about the need for appropriate scaffolding and choice of tasks. In reflecting on your own role as a teacher, ask yourself these questions:

- Did the program build on and link to what children already know?
- Did teaching and learning tasks sufficiently extend learners beyond what they could already do?
- Was adequate and appropriate scaffolding provided so that tasks could be successfully completed?
- Is there evidence that children have developed new concepts or reached new levels of understanding, such that they will be able to use these in new contexts and for their own purposes?

### **Phonics, Spelling, and Grammar: Where Do They Fit in an Integrated Unit?**

The final sections of this chapter address a number of related questions that concern many teachers, particularly those who are committed to teaching language in ways that recognize its wholeness and see it as a system for meaning making. Many teachers ask themselves:

- Is it still relevant to focus on phonics, spelling, and grammar?
- Is it possible to focus on them within an integrated meaning-focused approach?

To both these questions, my own response would be yes: as most teachers would agree, there is a place for the teaching of phonics, spelling, and grammar—in other words, for a focus on language as “object.” There is a place for children to learn *about* language, as well as to learn it and to learn through it. The critical question, of course, is how this can be done in ways that do not compromise interactive and meaning-driven classroom practices.

It is useful to bear in mind three principles:

1. Move from whole to part.
2. Move from meaning to form.
3. Move from familiar to unfamiliar.

And, for all three principles, we should add “and back again”! To form a metaphor for these principles, imagine yourself standing on a hillside looking out across a panoramic view, with a pair of binoculars in your hand. In front of you are fields, mountains, and forests. In the far distance, you can glimpse the sea and a boat. Your first gaze is at the whole vista ahead of you, the overall view from where you are standing. But after a while, you use your binoculars to focus in on a particular part of the view, to hone in on a detail of the landscape. (You know how to locate this detail, where to train your binoculars, because you have already seen it as a part of the whole.) When you have finished focusing on these details you will probably savor the whole panorama again, but this time with an enhanced sense of what is there.

In this scenario, what you almost certainly would *not* do is look through the binoculars before you have first looked at the view and located an area to focus on. Neither would you turn around and point the binoculars behind you! (Because, of course, if you did either of these things, you wouldn’t really know what you were looking at.)

To return this idea to the classroom, imagine the topic you are working on to be the view. Your overall aim is for students to construct knowledge and develop understandings about the topic, and to use language meaningfully and purposefully. But this does not prevent you, in the course of the topic, from “training the binoculars” by helping your students focus “close up” on a detail of language: a point of grammar, some phonic knowledge, a spelling pattern, the schematic structure of a particular genre, or a group of connectives and conjunctions. (Remember, you have already identified these through the language inventory of the topic and through what you know about students’ language needs.) You may wish to spend some time on this “close-up view,” but while you are doing so both you and the students know where these “parts” fit into the “whole,” and how the focus on form is related to the meanings being made. Approaching the teaching of forms and parts in this way puts grammar, spelling, and phonics where they belong: as worthy objects of study in the service of meaning making and learning. In other words, learning about language is most meaningful when it occurs in the context of language-in-use. Figure 7–5 illustrates this idea.

The “hourglass” here illustrates how the focus of teaching and learning changes throughout the teaching of a topic, with the “narrowing” of the hourglass representing a focus on language itself. Teaching and learning activities move at times from learning *through* language, to learning *about* language, to once more learning *through* language. In other words, teaching progresses from meaning to form, from whole to part, and back again. The focus on “language as object” is in the context of the overall

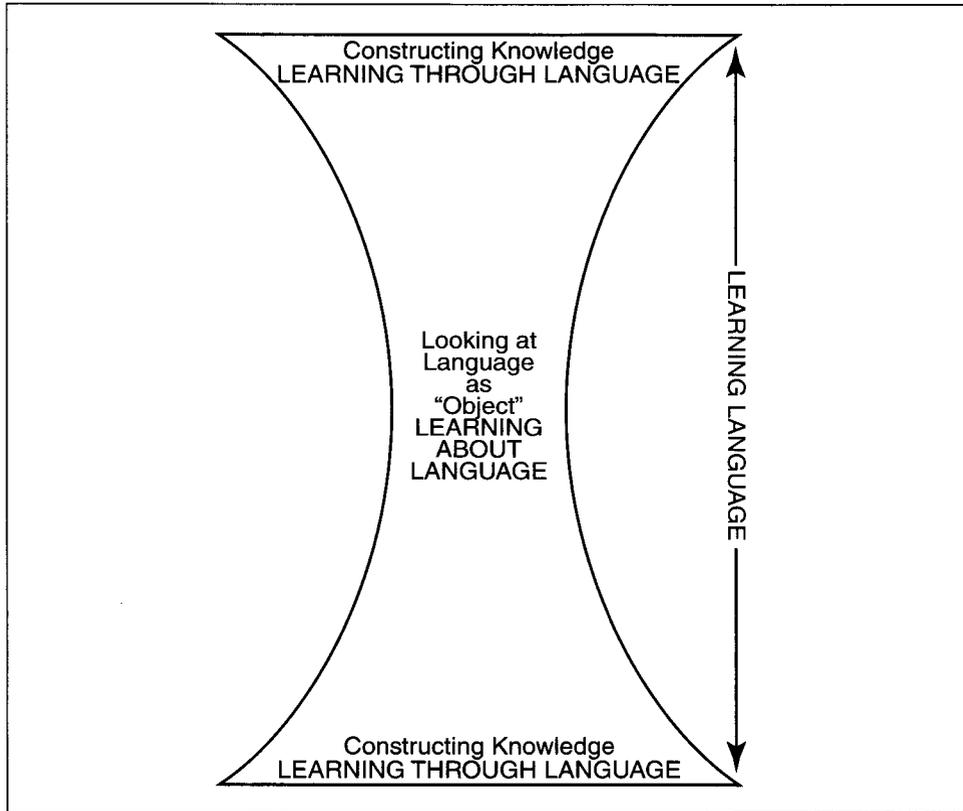


FIGURE 7-5. *Focusing on Language as "Object"*

meanings being made and the curriculum knowledge being constructed. As discussed earlier, the choice of what aspects of grammar, spelling, or phonic knowledge to focus on will already have been determined by the choice of language focus for the topic, but it may be that in the course of the unit of work, you will have identified other language aspects of the topic that you wish to address.

### ***Teaching Phonemic Awareness and Spelling: Recognizing Analogies***

Some researchers have shown a strong relationship between children's awareness of phonemic patterns (the relationships between sounds and letters) and their ability to rhyme (see Bryant and Bradley 1985; Goswami and Bryant 1990). Children's rhyming skills appear to be good predictors of later spelling and reading success. A child who is good at rhyming may realize that shared sounds between words, such as *hat* and *rat*, often also mean shared spelling patterns. Later on, they may work out how to recognize or spell a word that they have not seen before through analogies with more

familiar words. (For example, knowing how to read or spell *light* may help them read or spell *fright*.) Being able to form *generalizations* about how words are read or spelled, through *analogy*, is a reasoning process that is essential for developing phonemic awareness in reading and recognition of orthography (spelling patterns) in writing.

The use of rhymes and books containing rhyme are likely to be helpful for all children learning to read and write. Being able to recognize words that rhyme and to be helped to produce rhymes is probably especially useful for children who are less familiar with the sounds of the language. (At the same time, note that books containing large numbers of “nonsense” rhyming words may initially be very confusing for ESL learners.)

The teaching of phonemic awareness (knowledge of letter-sound relationships) and spelling is usually seen as of particular significance for younger grades, although many older ESL learners may also need a specific focus on these aspects of language too. Once again, the principles of whole to part, and familiar to unfamiliar, are important ones.

#### TEACHING PHONEMIC AWARENESS

An alphabetic system uses letters as symbols for sounds, so that it is possible for a reader to use letter-sound relationships in decoding words. As discussed in Chapter 5, this is one of several reading strategies that children need to acquire. However, in English, letter-sound relationships do not always help, since they are not always consistent. Children therefore need to become aware that letter-sound relationships lead to possibilities, rather than certainties! Learning about phonic generalizations can help children in two ways:

1. When readers meet a word they do not know, one of several strategies they need to use is checking their prediction against the first letter or letter cluster of the word (see Chapter 5). Phonic knowledge is essential for this.
2. Sometimes it is possible for an unknown word to be “sounded out” by the reader. If the word is already known aurally, this process may allow the reader to recognize the word.

However, letters and sounds in isolation are very abstract concepts, even for native speakers, and introducing individual letters, letter clusters, or blends out of a meaningful context is an even more abstract task for a student who is unfamiliar with the language and the sounds of the language. Therefore, as a general approach, embed any focus on phonics teaching within familiar material that is meaningful to the learner. A Big Book that has been read several times is a useful vehicle for phonics teaching. The following process provides one example of a simplified procedure to use with beginning readers that illustrates how phonemic awareness can be developed inductively, using the three principles of moving from known to unknown, from whole to part, and from meaning to form. (You would probably want to add other related activities as well.)

- Choose a book that you have already read several times with children (and with which they can now probably join in as you read). Select a sentence relevant to the phonic knowledge you want to focus on. Read it together with the children, pointing to the words as you read. For example: *Run, run, as fast as you can; you can't catch me, I'm the gingerbread man!*
- From the sentence, select a word containing the relevant letters and sounds you wish to focus on. Here you may select the word *man*. Read it with the children. Ask individual children to point to it within the sentence, or find it in the book.
- Use the word *man* to generate other *-an* words. They may be others in the same book (*can*) or ones children already know (*ran*) or that can be easily illustrated (*pan*).
- Read the book again, asking children to point to any *-an* words.
- Make up wall charts with lists of these words, and encourage children to add to them as they find or think of new words. These words may come from other books, wall charts, or words already known to the children. These specific words can be used to help children come to a generalization about the way in which the sound common to all is written down. Gradually introduce more complex words that illustrate the same sound-letter relationship (*hand, land, sand*).

What is important here is that children learn about sound-letter relationships inductively, within the context of something that is meaningful and whole, rather than through abstract and unrelated phonics exercises. There may be times when a more deductive approach is useful. Children who are already literate in their first language may appreciate being given a generalization explicitly and finding other examples. (This is the approach taken in many phonic-driven approaches to the teaching of reading.) But this becomes a “telling” rather than a “reasoning” process.

#### TEACHING ABOUT SPELLING

The phrase “teaching *about* spelling” is used in place of “teaching spelling” deliberately here, to emphasize again that—as with learning phonic knowledge—learning to spell is largely a reasoning process and one based on the learner’s ability to develop generalizations. Once the child has discovered that written words are constant and can be named, then, as discussed earlier, the sounds of the words can be related to the letters that represent the words. But it is probably as children begin to find a way to represent what they want to write themselves that they need to explore more systematically how the phonemic system works.

It is important to recognize that the phonetic spellings of a young learner are often indicative of positive understandings about the systems of orthography (spelling patterns) of English; *train* written as *chrn*, *elephant* written as *elft*, or *shopping* written as *shpg* indicate that quite a lot has been learned about sound-letter relationships. The unconventional spellings used by children in the earlier stages of writing are usually

quite systematic and related to the way they are articulating the words. Breaking up words into their constituent sounds is not an easy matter, especially for an ESL learner.

One of the major ways that children learn to spell is to recognize and reproduce common spelling patterns. Collecting and recording words that have a common pattern and that rhyme is one way of doing this (see Figure 7-6 as examples). Encourage children to add to these lists as they find new words with the same pattern.

When children do not know the spelling of a word, try to scaffold *how* to spell:

- Encourage children to “have a go” at writing a word, to use their existing knowledge about how sounds are written.
- Encourage them to articulate the word slowly, and as they say the word, to think about each of the sounds they can hear.

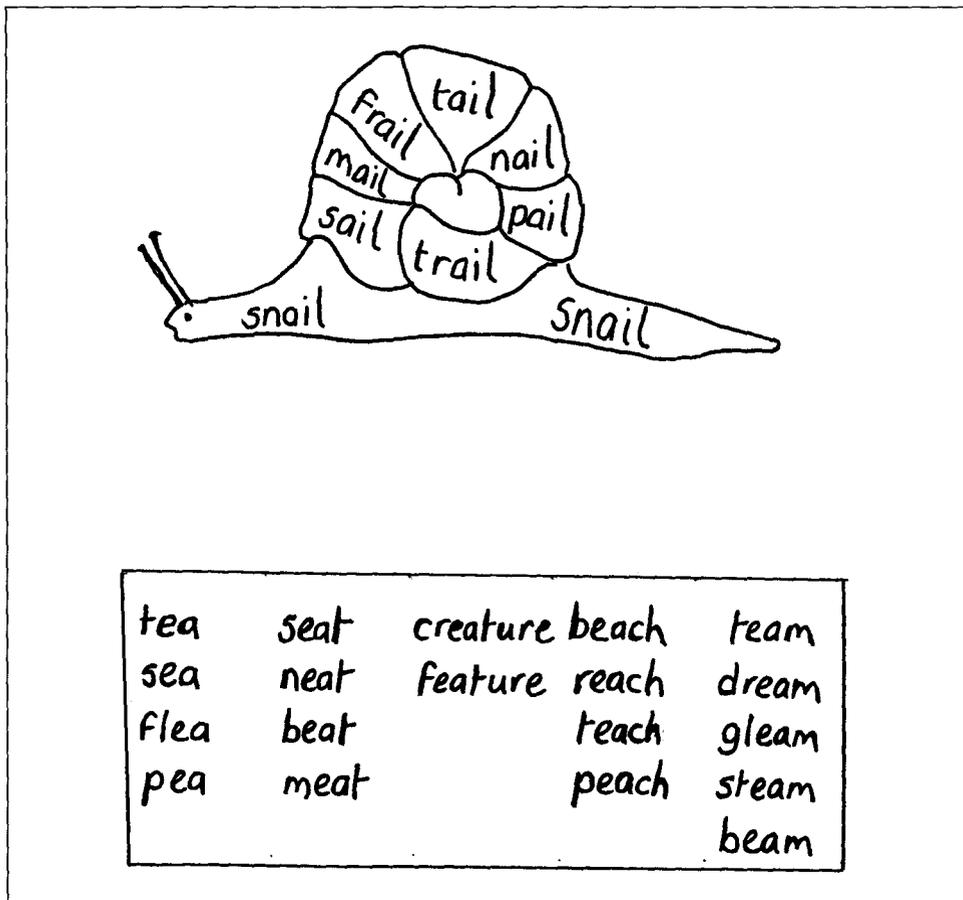


FIGURE 7-6. Finding Common Patterns

- Draw analogies with other known words, and help them recognize a common pattern.

Note that providing lists of *thematically* related words to be learned by rote (perhaps related to a topic being studied) may assist in the learning of new vocabulary, but it may *not* be helpful in teaching *about* spelling, since thematically related words are unlikely to have a spelling pattern in common.

## In Summary

In this chapter, we have looked at a number of reasons for supporting the integration of ESL students into the mainstream class:

- Language is best learned through meaningful use in a variety of contexts, and the curriculum is an ideal and ready-made resource for a focus on language for learning.
- Concurrent teaching of language and content allows ESL students to continue learning as they are developing their second language
- Language and curriculum learning support each other via the ongoing recycling of concepts and knowledge and the language through which they are expressed.
- The “language-rich diet” of ESL teaching is of benefit to all students: it supports all children to use language in ways that are new and critical to academic learning.

In an integrated curriculum, children learn language, learn through language, and learn about language. They *learn* language in the process of using it. They learn *through* language when they use it to construct knowledge across all areas of the curriculum. And they learn *about* language when there is a focus on “language as object.” In a well-planned integrated program, all three of these aspects of language development have the potential to be brought together.

## A Final Word

The potential for learning is not finite or bounded. And the potential for learning in school should not be restricted by a student’s lack of knowledge of the language of instruction, because in this case—to return to the conclusion of Chapter 1—ESL learners are denied their right to be full members of the school community. They should not be expected to “prove themselves linguistically before they can claim their full entitlement.” The responsibility for their second language development belongs to the school and ultimately to their teachers.

No matter the educational constraints on both teachers and students sometimes imposed by government policies or education systems, *individual* teachers can and do make a difference to children's lives. The notion of scaffolding that has been a recurrent theme throughout this book represents a way that individual teachers can maintain high expectations of their students and reject the inequality that offers to some students an alternative or watered-down curriculum, or one that, for reasons of language, they are unable to access. It assumes three principles. The first is to link with and build on what children bring to school: their language, culture, understandings, and experiences. The second is to provide the kind of support—responsive to the particular language development needs of second language learners and to the language demands of the mainstream curriculum—to enable them to learn successfully through collaboration with their teachers and with other students. The third is the willingness to “hand over” to students the responsibility to use what they have learned independently, in new contexts and for their own purposes.

We know that some students begin their school life with less of what Delpit (1988) refers to as “the accoutrements of the culture of power” than other students. Some critical theorists refer to this as “cultural capital,” and part of that cultural capital is the ability to control the spoken and written codes of the dominant society. As we have discussed, it would be wrong to assume that children who are not fluent in these codes will automatically acquire them through the process of being in school, without specific kinds of support. In the words of Julianna, with which this book began, ESL learners need to be able to use English not only for day-to-day purposes but “for school work and strangers”—for academic learning and ultimately for negotiating their place in the wider society. This book has suggested some ways in which individual teachers can help ensure that this occurs.

### **Suggestions for Further Reading**

- CLEGG, J., ed. 1996. *Mainstreaming ESL: Case Studies in Integrating ESL Students into the Mainstream Curriculum*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters. (See especially Introduction.)
- CUMMINS, J. 2000. “Transformative Pedagogy: Who Needs It?” Chapter 10 in *Language, Power and Pedagogy: Bilingual Children in the Crossfire*, ed. J. Cummins. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- DAVISON, C., and A. WILLIAMS. 2001. “Integrating Language and Content: Unresolved Issues.” Chapter 3 in *English as a Second Language in the Mainstream: Teaching Learning and Identity*, ed. B. Mohan, C. Leung, and C. Davison. London: Longman.
- SHORT, D. 1993. “Assessing Integrating Language and Content.” *TESOL Quarterly* 27 (4): 627–56.

# SCAFFOLDING TEACHING

## Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

PAULINE GIBBONS

Foreword by Jim Cummins

**H**ow does a mainstream elementary classroom teacher with little or no specialized ESL training meet the challenge of teaching linguistically diverse students? Pauline Gibbons suggests how: integrate the teaching of English with the content areas of the regular curriculum. What's more, she *shows* how in this practical resource book.

Gibbons begins with a strong theoretical underpinning for her practice, drawing on a functional model of language, sociocultural theories of learning, and current research on second-language development. After supporting her view that the regular curriculum offers the best language-learning environment for young ESL students, Gibbons demonstrates the ways in which content areas provide a context for the teaching of English skills, from speaking and listening to reading and writing. These skills can be integrated in the learning of diverse subjects as Gibbons illustrates with a wide range of teaching and learning activities across the curriculum, supplemented with programming and assessment formats and checklists.

Language learning is not a simple linear process. It involves the ongoing development of skills for a range of purposes. Gibbons sees this development as largely the result of the social contexts and interactions in which learning occurs. By focusing on the ways in which teachers can "scaffold" language and learning in the content areas, she takes a holistic approach—one that appreciates the struggle of students learning a new language, while simultaneously developing subject knowledge in it, and acknowledges the challenge for teachers to address these needs.

Given today's culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms, ESL students can no longer be thought of as a group apart from the mainstream—they *are* the mainstream. This book describes the ways to ensure ESL learners become full members of the school community with the language and content skills they need for success.

**Pauline Gibbons** teaches postgraduate courses in TESOL at the University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. A teacher and teacher educator for many years, she has worked in Hong Kong, Laos, Thailand, the Marshall Islands, and South Africa among other locations. Her special interest is in elementary-level ESL pedagogy and the integration of language and content teaching. She is the author of another Heinemann title, *Learning to Learn in a Second Language* (1993).

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