ESL TEACHING

Principles for Success

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Introduction

> We have a thirty-five-minute period each day where kids are supposed to get either enrichment or support. The teachers are supposed to monitor the students and decide what they need. We don't like the idea because it is separating the high and the low students. Teachers were not able to collaborate, monitor, and assess students, so now our vice principal says everyone is going to take a standardized reading test that is quick to administer. What are they gonna find out? That newcomers don't speak English? That long-term English learners struggle with reading? This proves two things: Our administration is clueless because they think that separating students is the best way to go. Second, that our teachers don't want to make the effort to get to know their students.

This description was sent as a text to Mary, a teacher educator in a program preparing future teachers to work with English learners or what we call *emergent bilingual students*. The author of the text is a new teacher working in a rural farming community in her first teaching job. This new teacher learned how to work with emergent bilingual students in her teacher preparation program, but, unfortunately, other teachers in her school have received very little training in how to work with students who come to school speaking languages other than English. Schools in the U.S. are growing more ethnically and linguistically diverse each year, and all educators, not just ESL or bilingual teachers, need to understand how to work with the changing populations of students (Goulah and Soltero 2015; Lucas, Villegas, and González 2008; Wiley et al. 2013).

We believe that educators want to do what is best for their students. Good teachers are open to knowledge and are the ones best suited to use that knowledge to provide effective instruction (Majumdar 2014). But with the growing changes in student demographics and the demands of standardized testing and curriculum, teachers like the teacher quoted earlier are not always supported in using current methods. A Teaching and Learning International Survey conducted by the

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Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) showed that American teachers face many more challenges than teachers in other developed countries (Majumdar 2014). They receive less helpful professional development and do not feel that their profession is valued by society. In contrast, in countries where teachers are respected and are given high-quality professional learning opportunities, teachers feel empowered "to make complex decisions and solve problems easily" (1). These teachers are able to connect theory and practice, and their students experience academic success.

Majumdar suggests that appropriate teacher development goals should include the integration of new knowledge and skills into practice, the connection of discipline knowledge with curriculum standards, the development of research-based practices, and the achievement of measurable school achievement in a complex school environment.

This book, *ESL Teaching: Principles for Success*, is written with these teacher development goals in mind. Although the principles in this book can be applied broadly to different contexts, the book and the examples are specific to the U.S. setting. We wrote this book to support administrators and teachers, both mainstream and ESL/bilingual, to work more effectively with emergent bilingual students in schools.

Emergent bilingual learners (EBLs) or emergent bilinguals (EBs) are students who come to school speaking languages other than English. Many different terms are used to describe these students, including English Language Learners (ELLs), English Learners (ELs), English as a Second Language (ESL) learners, English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students, culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) learners, bilingual learners, English as an Additional Language (EALs) learners, Language Minority (LM), Limited English Speakers (LES), second language learners (L2), and a term used in government documents, Limited English Proficient students (LEPs). In early childhood a commonly used description of preschool English learners is dual language learners (DLLs), because educators understand that these young learners are developing the basics of their home language while they are learning their new language, English (E. Garcia 2012; O. García and Kleifgen 2010; Goldenberg et al. 2013; Severns 2012).

O. García, Kleifgen, and Flachi (2008) argue that *emergent bilingual* is a more appropriate way to refer to students who are learning English because it validates the language or languages students come to school speaking and acknowledges the fact that, as they learn English, they are becoming bilingual. They are not simply learning English, as the term *English learner* implies; they are emergent bilinguals. It is critical to consider the names we use to describe students. As O. García and Kleifgen (2010) explain

When officials and educators ignore the bilingualism that these students can and must develop through schooling in the United States, they perpetuate inequities in the education of these students. That is, they discount the home languages and the cultural understandings of these children and assume that their needs are the same as a monolingual child. (2)

In fact, many of these students learning English are becoming emergent multilinguals as they already speak more than one language before beginning to learn English. In this book, we use the term *emergent bilingual* as well as other commonly used terms to describe these students.

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES IN SCHOOLS

The number of children under the age of 17 living with immigrant parents grew 60 percent from 1990 to 2000 and another 33 percent from 2000 to 2012 to 17.4 million (Nwosu, Bartalova, and Auclai 2014). These demographics have important implications for schools. *Education Week* reported that in fall 2014 for the first time minority students became the numerical majority in schools in the U.S. The combined population of Latinos, African Americans, and Asian Americans represents 50.3 percent of the K–12 student population. This shift in the student population has not been accompanied by a corresponding shift in the teacher workforce. In the 2011–2012 school year, 82 percent of public school teachers were non-Hispanic white, 7 percent were non-Hispanic black, and 8 percent were Hispanic (Maxwell 2014b). These demographics have particular implications for those minority/majority students who are emergent bilinguals.

The number of students in U.S. schools who are emergent bilinguals has risen from 3.5 million in 1998 to more than 5 million. They represent a little over 10 percent of the school population overall and a much higher percent in some parts of the country (Bartalova and McHugh 2010). These numbers continue to grow as students arrive from different places for different reasons. Immigrants come into this country because of both push and pull factors. There are reasons immigrants feel pushed away from their home countries. Some come here fleeing extreme poverty, war, or religious or ethnic persecution. Others are escaping natural disasters, limited access to water, or famine. The U.S. pulls immigrants who are seeking education and job opportunities not available to them in their native countries. In addition, many immigrants come here to reunite with family members who have immigrated here earlier.

Immigrant families from across the globe are sometimes able to immigrate when other family members living here sponsor them, but oftentimes women and children come alone. It is estimated that almost two million Mexican and Central

American unaccompanied minor children are living in the U.S. Between 2011 and 2014, 137,000 minor children and family units with at least one parent arrived in the U.S. (Rosenblum 2015). In the fall of 2013 more than 55,000 family units and unaccompanied immigrant children fleeing violence, abuse, and poverty at home arrived in the U.S. (Maxwell 2014). These children, most of whom eventually reunite with some family members living in this country, have tenuous status.

In 2012 the Secretary of Homeland Security announced that certain unauthorized immigrants who entered the United States as children would be able to apply for deferred action, granting relief from deportation and receiving work authorization for two years. The Migration Policy Institute estimates that more than one half million of these Deferred Action for Childhood Arrival (DACA) immigrants have applied for deferred action (Batalova, Hooker, and Capps 2013; Nwosu, Bartalova, and Auclai 2014). Their cases need to be reviewed and, in the meantime, they can attend school while awaiting decisions from immigration judges about whether they may remain (Maxwell 2014). However, in August 2014, the House of Representatives voted not to renew DACA, leaving new arrivals in a limbo situation.

More recently, the tension between protection and enforcement of laws regarding unauthorized immigration of people not having valid humanitarian claims has initiated a new child and family court docket to speed up review of these immigrants. In addition, new cross agency coordination with Mexico and additional detention centers have stemmed the flow of these immigrants considerably (Rosenblum 2015). An investigative report by Nazario (2015) is an exposé of this cross agency coordination with Mexico. The report revealed that the U.S. government has spent "tens of millions of dollars" that has resulted in "a ferocious crackdown on refugees fleeing violence in Central America" (1). Nazario explains that many of these refugees are trying to escape escalated gang violence in Guatemala, El Salvador, and Honduras and provides examples from her interviews of the atrocities refugees face at home and in their journey to escape. Nazario concludes her report saying

> The United States should develop a system for these refugees, much like Europe is now doing for Syrians, to equitably allocate people who are fleeing harm throughout this continent—including sending them to safer countries in Latin America, to Canada and to the United States. (2)

Nazario reports that many refugees are killed, kidnapped, raped, and mistreated by Mexican gangs and some corrupt officials as they try to reach the U.S. for asylum. There is a good possibility the U.S. will provide even more money to Mexico to stem the tide of undocumented refugees entering the country. Even though Mexico

is apprehending about 70 percent of Central Americans attempting to cross through Mexico, in September 2015 more than twice the number of unaccompanied children were caught and put into federal custody at the U.S. border than were caught the previous year.

Schools will continue to be impacted by these unaccompanied minors who have suffered and are real refugees. The students struggle with English as well as with psychological factors, including stress from their long and dangerous journeys and a feeling of abandonment by relatives they are living with now and those who left them behind in their home countries.

Some states, including California, Texas, Illinois, New York, New Jersey, and Florida, have had large numbers of emergent bilinguals for many years. However, other states have experienced rapid growth in recent years—Nevada, North Carolina, and Georgia have experienced an almost 400 percent growth in the last twenty years. Arkansas, Tennessee, Nebraska, South Carolina, Utah, Washington, and Alabama all experienced 200 percent or more growth in this same time period (Pandya, Bartalova, and McHugh 2011). Teachers in these states are often less well prepared to work with EBLs, and training for both preservice and inservice teachers is often more limited.

Teachers must be prepared to meet the needs of the many emergent bilingual students in schools; however, a recent report concerning how prepared teachers are tells us that

> While it is true that there are educational specialists, for example, English as a second language and bilingual teachers, who have expertise in supporting ELLs, many teachers do not. Yet the reality is that most, if not all teachers have or can expect to have ELL students in their classroom and therefore must be prepared to best support these children. In many cases, a general education teacher who knows the content and pedagogy to teach to the grade-level standards will also need specific knowledge and skills to help ELLs access the curricula. (Samson and Collins 2012, 1–2)

Our own work in professional development for inservice teachers in the last few years alone has taken us to several states with fast-growing emergent bilingual populations, including North Carolina, Tennessee, Utah, and Alabama. In addition, we have worked in other states, including Virginia, Mississippi, Nebraska, Wisconsin, and Iowa, where districts have experienced a sudden growth in the number of emergent bilinguals. As we talk to and with teachers, we are impressed by the diversity of the schools and students. At the same time, the needs of the teachers are quite similar. Both teachers and administrators need to understand second language acquisition, linguistics, second language teaching methods, and cross-cultural communication. In this book we focus on principles for effective teaching of emergent

bilinguals. These principles are based on current understandings of second language acquisition, linguistics, and cross-cultural communication.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE TEACHING

In the first chapter of this book we review older ESL teaching methods up through the 1980s and the educational theories that influenced the development of these methods. We then discuss what educational organizations, researchers, and practitioners say constitutes best practices for emergent bilingual students. Next, we lay out seven principles for supporting the academic success of English learners in schools based on these reports as well as our own work with schools and individual teachers. Our goal is to take theory and research, explain it in a comprehensible way, and demonstrate to readers how to implement the principles. While all seven principles listed in Figure I–1 are interrelated and should be present in effective classrooms, we will explain each with specific examples in individual chapters.

The first principle, teaching should be learner centered, emphasizes the importance of knowing one's students. We describe different types of English learners and their needs. We lay out the general levels of progress that emergent bilinguals move through and what teachers should expect from students at different stages of their development of English. We provide examples of how teachers who understand their students' backgrounds have met the needs of students at different levels of English proficiency.

In our discussion of the second principle, teaching should go from whole to part, we provide a rationale for the development of thematic instruction or units of inquiry based on big questions. When emergent bilingual students understand the big picture of what they are studying, they can make better sense of the English language instruction. When teachers plan integrated units that seek to answer important questions, they support students in learning both language and subject area content.

As we discuss the third principle, teaching should develop academic language and content, we show how creative teachers develop both content and language objectives to meet the standards and support the development of academic language for their English learners. We provide examples from teachers who have carefully planned language and content objectives and have scaffolded instruction to help their students develop the academic language they need to access the curriculum. In addition, we discuss methods, such as CALLA, that have been developed to teach academic language and content.

1. Teaching should be learner centered.

2. Teaching should go from whole to part.

3. Teaching should develop academic language and content.

4. Teaching should be meaningful and purposeful.

5. Teaching should include interactions to develop both oral and written language.

6. Teaching should support students' languages and cultures.

7. Teaching and assessment should reflect faith in the learner.

FIGURE I–1 *Principles for Effective Teaching*

The fourth principle, teaching should be meaningful and purposeful, emphasizes the need to provide learners with meaningful and purposeful activities that engage them in learning academic language and content. Students need to be interested in what they are learning, and teachers need to draw on students' backgrounds and interests so that they become actively involved in learning the content laid out by the standards.

The fifth principle is that teaching should include carefully planned interactions to develop both oral and written language. Students are often more engaged when they are interacting and learning with others. Emergent bilinguals need opportunities to use academic language, so teachers need to carefully plan activities that encourage students to talk together, problem solve together, and compose together using their new language. Through involvement in carefully planned interactions emergent bilinguals develop both oral and written language.

In all classrooms, students' languages and cultures should be supported and promoted. For this reason, teaching should support students' languages and cultures, our sixth principle. Lessons should be based on language acquisition theory and research showing the importance of using students' first languages in teaching. As we discuss this principle, we review models of bilingual education and review the research showing the effectiveness of each model. We also discuss *translanguaging*, the use of students' home languages and English to negotiate meaning in the classroom. In addition, we show how teachers can support students' first languages even when they do not speak their languages.

In our final chapter, we explain the last principle, that teaching and assessment should reflect faith in the learner to expand student potential. Even students with low levels of English proficiency can and do learn when teachers organize

curriculum in ways that help them develop the academic language of school as they learn the academic content.

EXAMPLES OF CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Our goal in this book is to help teachers understand these seven key principles by explaining them and showing how teachers have applied them. Throughout the book we will describe classrooms where the theory and research is brought to life. These classroom examples come from practicing teachers with years of experience working with emergent bilinguals as well as from new teachers who are working to understand how to translate theory and research into practice. The examples provided are from different grade levels and from urban, suburban, and rural schools. Emergent bilinguals speak different home languages and bring different educational, social, and economic backgrounds to school. It is our belief that when teachers follow the principles we outline in this book, they will be able to implement effective practices for all their students.

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Teaching Should Be Learner Centered

A LEARNER-CENTERED FIRST-GRADE UNIT

Alicia teaches first grade in a mid-sized city along the Texas–Mexico border. Most of her students speak Spanish as their home language, and many have family from Mexico or still living in Mexico. Some have one parent who is a native English speaker and another who is from Mexico and dominant in Spanish. Alicia's students are living between the worlds of the country on the U.S. side of the border with its customs and traditions and those of the neighboring country to the south. Alicia wants her students to be proud of both languages and cultures. She decides to begin her year with a theme on family organized around the big question, "How are our families the same and how are they different?"

Alicia teaches in a district that promotes instruction in English using all English materials, many of which are not culturally relevant for her students. However, while English is encouraged, Spanish is not prohibited. Alicia, once an immigrant child herself, is bilingual and tries to find ways that allow her students to draw on their first language as they are learning in English. She finds resources that support her students' lived experiences and their first language.

She begins her unit by reading *In My Family/En mi familia* (Garza 1996), a book describing experiences of Mexican American families living in the United States. Each page has a picture of a family activity and a passage in which the author writes her memories of the experience in English and also in Spanish. Alicia reads a page of the book in English, and then asks student to brainstorm a special word they remember from the story using Ada's "Building a Word Treasury" activity (Ada 2003). As children list words, Alicia writes them on a sheet to be kept hung up around the

room. She allows children to respond in either English or Spanish. As children dictate words, all the children remember parts of the reading where they heard the words. Later in the day during guided reading, Alicia reads and discusses the same page of the book in Spanish to a group of students less proficient in English.

The children and the teacher read other books together about families including another Garza book, *Family Pictures/ Cuadros de familia* (1990), *Mi familia/My Family* (Ancona 2004), *We Are Cousins/Somos primos* (Bertrand 2007), and *Tortillas and Lullabies/Tortillas y cancioncitas* (Reiser 1998). Each of these books leads the students to talk about their own families. For instance, in *Tortillas and Lullabies*, four different generations of women share their traditions with food and family, and in *We Are Cousins,* González shows how cousins are friends and sometimes argue but, in the end, they are family. The teacher also reads *Celebrations/Celebraciones: Holidays of the United States and Mexico/Días feriados de los Estados Unidos y México* (Grande-Tabor 2004). Alicia has each student interview one of their relatives about family traditions and asks them to collect a favorite recipe.

Several of the children cross the border on weekends and visit *abuelos* (grandparents), *tíos* (uncles and aunts), and *primos* (cousins), and they interview one of their Mexican relatives. Other students interview relatives living nearby in the United States. With the results from the interviews, the teacher and students create a Venn diagram showing similarities and differences in traditions between the two cultures. They also gather the recipes and make an illustrated class recipe book.

A favorite class activity is writing together a letter to a favorite author/illustrator, Anthony Browne. They read and discuss *My Dad* (Browne 2000), *My Mom* (Browne 2005b) and *My Brother* (Browne 2007b), books Alicia also has in Spanish *Mi papá* (Browne 2002), *Mi mamá* (Browne 2005a), *and Mi hermano* (Browne 2007a). Browne's books are very popular with the children because they are humorous and have such imaginative illustrations. Alicia's students eagerly share their favorite parts of the stories and favorite illustrations as the class composes the letter to the author/illustrator.

Alicia culminates the unit by reading two books that reflect some of the experiences of her students, *René Has Two Last Names/René tiene dos apellidos* (Colato Lainez 2009) and *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match: Marisol McDonald no combina* (Browne 2011). In the first book, René is confused when he first attends school in the U.S. because in school only one of his last names, his father's, is used. René feels part of his identity is missing because the custom in Spanish-speaking countries is to have children use both the mother's and father's last names.

In the second book, Marisol, who is a Peruvian, Scottish American bicultural girl, shows her bicultural preferences as she eats peanut butter and jelly burritos or plays soccer. When she tries to conform to U.S. culture, she is unhappy and loses her creativity. After brainstorming how they are alike and different from René and

Marisol, students list how they are the same as and different from one another. They then make their own "I Am Me" books. These books include their full names, describe how they look, what they like to eat, what they like to do, and who the members of their families are. Alicia's students begin their year engaged in reading about topics that they are interested in and that draw on their background experiences. They talk and write about things that are important to them.

The activities for the unit meet state standards for grade 1. For example, one standard asks that students describe the importance of family customs and traditions. Another requires that students learn the correct style for writing a formal letter, including where to place the date and how to choose an appropriate salutation and closing. In addition, grade 1 standards ask that students make personal connections to their readings and work on vocabulary building. The books they read connect to the unit content and reinforce both literacy and vocabulary development. See Figure 2–1 for a bibliography of the books Alicia used. Throughout the unit, Alicia's students are involved in well-planned activities that support their learning and their acquisition of English.

Ancona, George. 2004. *Mi familia: My Family*. New York: Children's Press.

Bertrand, Diane. 2007. *Somos primos: We Are Cousins*. Houston, TX: Piñata Books.

Browne, Anthony. 2000. *My Dad*. London, UK: Doubleday.

Browne, Anthony. 2002. *Mi papá*. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Econóica.

Browne, Anthony. 2005a. *Mi mamá*. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Browne, Anthony. 2005b. *My Mom*. London, UK: Doubleday.

Browne, Anthony. 2007a. *Mi hermano*. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Browne, Anthony. 2007b. *My Brother*. London, UK: Doubleday.

Browne, Mónica. 2011. *Marisol McDonald Doesn't Match: Marisol McDonald no combina*. New York: Children's Book Press.

Colato Lainez, R. 2009. *René Has Two Last Names/ René tiene dos apellidos*. Houston, TX: Arte Público.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. 1990. *Family Pictures: Cuadros de familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Garza, Carmen Lomas. 1996. *In My Family: En mi familia*. San Francisco: Children's Book Press.

Grande-Tabor, Nancy María. 2004. *Celebrations/ Celebraciones: Holidays of the United States and Mexico/Días feriado de los Estados Unidos y México*. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge.

Reiser, Lynn. 1998. *Tortillas and Lullabies/Tortillas y cancioncitas*. New York: Greenwillow Books.

FIGURE 2–1 *Family Unit Books*

Family Unit for Older Students

Alicia's unit was developed for first-grade students, but the topic is also appropriate for ESL middle, secondary, and adult students. Teachers might begin the year with a family unit to get to know their students and to help students get to know one another. A family theme draws on older students' backgrounds, experiences, and interests and provides opportunities for English language development. In Figure 2–2 we provide various suggestions that teachers of middle, high school, or adult English learners could use to support their language development. The ideas include reading and writing activities that emergent bilinguals would find engaging and interesting. In addition, suggestions for activities that would allow teachers to evaluate students' growth are listed.

LEARNER CENTERED, NOT TEACHER CENTERED

Bill Keane, a cartoonist who drew Family Circus cartoons for over fifty years, often showed in one cartoon what teacher educators have researched for years. A favorite cartoon of ours is one in which Billy leads his younger sister, Dolly, into the house after school explaining to their mother, "Dolly's school would be better if they didn't have that lady up front talkin' all the time." Billy understood a key problem in many classrooms: the teacher, not the students, was the center of learning. In Alicia's classroom it is the students who are at the center, not the teacher. The books she chose and the activities she planned for the students were based on her knowledge of their backgrounds. The suggestions for older students also are meant to engage them and draw on their interests and experiences.

The idea of the teacher as the source of all knowledge standing up front and delivering instruction follows from commonsense assumptions of how teachers should teach. With English language learners, the temptation to have a teacher-centered classroom arises because the perception is that the teacher has the English proficiency the students need, and therefore all knowledge must come from the teacher. However, it is important to remember that English language learners are not deficient just because they do not speak English. They bring a rich and varied background of experiences and talent to the classroom. Teachers who understand principles for effective teaching find ways to use their students' knowledge, including their first language and culture, even when the students do not speak English. They ensure that their instruction is learner centered, not teacher centered.

The reports and research reviews we summarized in Chapter 1 emphasize the need for students to engage in meaningful social interaction. In effective classes for emergent bilinguals, students work in pairs and small groups. They engage in

Activities for Reading, Writing, and Oral Language Development

Conduct a "Find someone who . . . " with directions like "Find someone who has more than eight cousins."

Bring in family photographs or use pictures on phones, blogs, or Facebook pages to discuss families in groups.

Draw and discuss family trees.

Interview each other about families to report back to the class.

Survey members of the class about family characteristics to chart.

Read society pages in a magazine or newspaper in L1 or in English to summarize and discuss in English.

Look at marriage and birth sections of the newspaper.

Compare and contrast marriage and birth customs in the U.S. and other countries.

Discuss birth order in families.

Discuss naming customs in countries.

Discuss family hierarchy, both traditional and present day.

Ask students to keep a diary about family events and personalities.

Make "My Family and Me" posters using photos, drawings, and pictures from magazines to tell the story.

Materials

Family photos, pictures on phones, blogs, Facebook pages

Books about families

Newspaper and magazine article columns related to family relations

Evaluation

Diary entries about family members

Family trees (oral presentation and written diagram)

Interview summaries

FIGURE 2–2 *Family Unit Adaptations for Middle, Secondary, and Adult Learners*

hands-on learning as they complete projects and present what they have learned to classmates. The teacher plans and directs student activity, but the focus should be on the students, not the teacher.

The materials used in the classroom are also important. In this era of standards-based instruction and high-stakes testing, educators across the country are paying attention to the needs of emergent bilinguals. In the Great Schools 2014 report on meeting the needs of English learners (Walter et al. 2014), criteria for appropriate materials for these students are laid out. Besides providing a wide variety of rigorous materials that align with both content and language standards, the report calls for materials that "offer a wide variety of culturally relevant texts, organized in appropriate themes/topics." The authors also explain, "texts must acknowledge students' life experiences, and social and emotional development" (22). They point out, "Texts provided in Spanish (or any other language) should be authentic, high quality, and should help students meet standards" (23). Certainly, the books Alicia used for her family unit meet these criteria.

TYPES OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Alicia's students were all first graders. Most were emergent bilinguals. However, her English learners were not all at the same level of English proficiency, and their background experiences varied a great deal. For example, Felipe was born in Mexico City, and his parents, both physicians, made sure that he attended a private preschool and kindergarten there before entering Alicia's classroom. Salvador, on the other hand, came from a rural village in southern Mexico where there was no preschool or kindergarten. His indigenous parents did not have the advantage of an education beyond second grade and the first language of the home is Mixteco. Salvador can communicate in Spanish, but is more proficient in Mixteco. Norma was born in the U.S. and attended preschool and kindergarten in the same school where she is now in first grade. Her parents immigrated when they were in elementary school. They are bilingual and use both Spanish and English in the home. Norma's older siblings are dominant English speakers and use English at home, so Norma came to school more proficient in English than Spanish.

Students, like those in Alicia's classroom, come to school with diverse language histories and varied academic background knowledge. Yet some teachers view all English learners as the same. As we have worked with teachers across the country, we have heard comments like the following:

> "Ji-woo, Azad, and Francisco are newcomers and are learning to read and write English very well, better than English learners who have been here since kindergarten!"

> "What do I do with these new refugee students from Nigeria? I don't think they have been to school at all!"

"My new students from Pakistan seem to be doing very well. Some even speak some English already!"

These comments and questions are typical of those we hear from teachers across the country. ELLs enter classes at different ages. Some do very well while many struggle. Teaching these diverse students is complex.

In a review of the research on concerns about English learners, G. García (2000) points out that "There is no typical LEP child" (3). It is important that teachers consider some basic differences among English learners as they plan instruction for them, including differences in their academic background and their academic language proficiency. For teachers to plan and implement learner-centered instruction, they must understand differences among the types of English learners. In the following sections we describe four types of emergent bilinguals: newly arrived with adequate schooling, newly arrived with limited or interrupted formal schooling, long-term English learners, and students at risk of becoming long-term English learners. We provide specific examples of each type of English learner.

Newly Arrived with Adequate Schooling

Students like Felipe who are newly arrived with adequate schooling have come to the U.S. within the last five years. When they arrive, these students bring with them the schooling experiences of their native country. They are literate in their first language and their content knowledge is at or near grade level. These students usually catch up academically fairly quickly, and teachers are impressed with their academic progress, especially when compared with other emergent bilinguals who have been in school in this country for the same amount of time. However, students with adequate formal schooling still struggle with standardized tests and exit exams because they have not fully developed their English skills. In addition, there may be gaps in their understanding and knowledge because tests are written assuming all students have the background of native English speakers.

Recent arrivals with adequate schooling may or may not adjust well socially. The school and community factors that influence them are extremely important. The economic situation their families find themselves in also makes a difference as to whether they succeed academically. Looking at two examples helps us understand these students and better assess their chances for achieving academic success.

Marisa

Marisa and her family immigrated to the United States from Mexico City when she was in the seventh grade. Her parents, concerned about the frequent kidnappings and the gang violence in different parts of Mexico and El Salvador, Guatemala, and

Honduras to the south, moved to Houston, Texas. They are both professionals and had the financial resources to move to the U.S. and start a business of their own.

In Mexico City, Marisa attended a private school from PreK to seventh grade where she had English classes twice a week. Her parents also provided once-a-week private English lessons for her on Saturdays. When she arrived in Houston, she was placed in a large middle school. She was overwhelmed with the amount of English she had to read, write, and understand, as well as the differences in the way teachers and students interacted with one another in school compared with her private school in Mexico City. Marisa's parents found her an English tutor. The family also connected with other families from Mexico City, and soon Marisa had a network of friends at school and outside of school. In addition, she joined a local Latino organization focused on supporting Latinos' academic progress.

Within a year, Marisa was doing very well in all her classes, although she still worried about the state standardized tests in reading, math, and writing. Marisa is now a junior in high school. She is on a college preparatory track and wants to study engineering. With the encouragement of her parents and school counselors, she has attended local and state conferences for Hispanics interested in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics). She is applying for admission and scholarships at several universities.

Marisa is a clear example of an adequate formal schooling student. Her parents, who themselves were well educated, were able to provide her with a good private school education in Mexico and with tutoring resources when in this country. She also has home and school support as she explores career options for her future. Marisa's future looks bright.

Ahmed

Ahmed, a fifth grader, is another example of a newly arrived student with adequate schooling. Like Marisa, he attended a private school and arrived in this country with grade-level literacy and academic content knowledge in Arabic. Because his parents were well educated and spoke good English, they were recruited to help the United States forces when they were in Iraq. However, when the U.S. withdrew they received threats and decided the family needed to move.

Although his academic background is similar to that of Marisa, Ahmed lacks the kinds of supports she had. His family moved to a city in the Midwest. While there were government agencies there to help Iraqi refugees, there were few community groups other than members of the local mosque that supported Iraqi or other Arabic-speaking Muslim refugees. In addition, his parents, highly educated professionals, had to accept jobs for which they were overqualified. These jobs provided some money, but the family still struggles financially.

Ahmed's friends are other refugee children. He faces racism from some Americans both inside and outside of school. As tensions from Muslim terrorist groups escalate around the world, Ahmed and his Muslim friends feel the distrust and dislike of some peers. They also feel that some of their teachers are uncomfortable around them. Ahmed does not believe some teachers want to help him when he asks for help. He remains quiet in class and seldom participates.

Ahmed's parents, though academically prepared, are not emotionally ready to help him in school because they are busy establishing themselves economically in the U.S. In sum, Ahmed's academic background may ultimately enable him to succeed, but he lacks family, school, and community support. Even with his strong home language academic background, Ahmed may find it difficult to succeed in school due to these out-of-school factors.

Newly Arrived with Limited or Interrupted Formal Schooling

A second type of emergent bilingual is the recent arrival with limited or interrupted formal schooling. Students in this group are also referred to as students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) because of their inconsistent schooling. These students face all the problems of any new immigrants, but they are much less prepared academically than students like Marisa and Ahmed. When they arrive, they have either had little or no schooling or schooling that was so often interrupted that they are significantly behind their peers in literacy development and academic content knowledge.

Limited formal schooling students have limited or no native language literacy to draw on as they learn to read and write in English. Sometimes teachers can tell if a newcomer is a limited formal schooling student either by the student's poorly developed handwriting or by the student's inability to do even basic math computation, such as addition or subtraction. Because of their limited experiences in school, they lack basic concepts in the different subject areas and are often at least two to three years below grade level in the content areas (Freeman and Freeman 2011).

These students must develop both conversational and academic English, become literate in English, and acquire the academic knowledge and skills they need to compete with native English speakers. Because they do not have the academic background to draw on in their home languages, they have difficulty with coursework in English and do poorly on standardized tests. These students struggle more than students like Marisa and Ahmed as they try to adjust to school. Since they have attended school infrequently, they do not understand how schools are organized and how students are expected to act in schools. Many of these students arrive as refugees or as unaccompanied minors, alone with no resources. Once they arrive, they struggle socially as they try to adjust to living and learning in a new culture.

Fazilah

Fazilah, originally from the Sudan, moved first to Chicago when she was twelve. Her parents decided to leave inner-city Chicago and moved to Portland, Maine, when Fazilah was fourteen. She and her family joined a large group of Sudanese that chose Portland as a refuge from the political turmoil, civil unrest, and poverty of their homeland. Portland, Maine, has the reputation among Sudanese refugees as a small town with a secure and healthy environment despite unrest and clashes with police at times (MacQuarrie 2009).

The official languages of the Sudan are Arabic and English. Access to education, especially for girls, is limited because of the violence and instability in the country. While boys, including her brothers, did go to school in Sudan, Fazilah, like most girls, was seldom allowed out of her house. As a result, Fazilah only attended school sporadically before coming to this country. Because of this, she was identified at the beginning level according to the state English language proficiency (WIDA) standards when she arrived in Portland. While she could speak Arabic, her reading and writing was not at grade level, and she spoke English only in phrases and short sentences. Although she had some basic communication ability in English, she was often confused when spoken to in English even about everyday things and had trouble expressing her ideas.

High school was difficult for Fazilah. She was in an ESL class for two periods a day and needed ESL support in her content classes. She felt isolated during her content classes as her English was limited, and she looked different from the other students. She and the other Muslim girls wore their *hijab*, head scarf, and usually also wore the *jilbab*, a fitted cloak often practical in the cold Maine weather although certainly different from the parkas and jeans worn by their U.S. counterparts. Fazilah's only friends were other Muslim girls and a few other girls from other countries in her ESL class. Fazilah felt desperate in her new setting and wondered if she would ever learn English and fit into this society.

Daniel

Fourteen-year-old Daniel traveled more than 1,000 miles to the United States from his small village in Honduras through Guatemala and Mexico without his family. The journey took him several months, and was full of hardships and often extremely dangerous. Daniel was assaulted by gang members, rode the infamous *tren de la muerte* (death train) or *La Bestia* (The Beast), and crossed over into the United States illegally only to be caught by immigration authorities.

Daniel's story is not unlike Enrique's story told by journalist Sonia Nazario in *Enrique's Journey* (Nazario 2014). The number of unaccompanied minors who made this trip, like Daniel, is daunting. For example, between September and August

2014, 55,000 unaccompanied minors arrived in the U.S. (Maxwell 2014). Many attempt the trip several times before finally making it. Many never make it. It is estimated that 200 to 300 die annually, and many more are seriously injured in their attempts to make this journey. As explained earlier, this journey has become more difficult and dangerous due to the Mexican crackdown on immigrants crossing Mexico, which is supported by U.S. dollars (Nazario 2015).

Among unaccompanied minors, Daniel's story is a familiar one. Daniel's mother left him with his grandmother when he was five years old. She found jobs as a housekeeper or in restaurants and sent money for clothes, birthday and Christmas gifts, and school supplies. Her telephone calls to Daniel were frequent at first with promises to return home to get him. But as the years went by the calls became less frequent. Daniel's grandmother had no control over him, and he frequently skipped school. Even when he did attend, the rural school offered little. There were no real supplies, and the poorly trained teachers either lacked control over their classrooms or punished students severely when they misbehaved. Several of his friends dropped out of school, were recruited into gangs, and turned to drugs.

Like many of the other unaccompanied children, Daniel became desperate to reunite with his mother. When his grandmother died, he knew he had to leave. He did not get along with his aunt or younger cousins and felt like a burden living with them. He heard stories of others who had gone north, and believed he could too. With only the clothes on his back and a package of food, he set out for *el norte*.

After Daniel was detained by immigration, he was kept in a detention center near Brownsville, Texas, for several weeks. Immigration located his mother, now married with two children born in the United States. She traveled from San Jose, California, to pick him up. He went to live with his mother and her new family. Their house was small and cramped. Although everyone spoke Spanish, he had difficulty adjusting to life with his mother, his new father, and siblings.

On top of these challenges, school was difficult for Daniel. He had to adjust to a new culture after an extremely traumatic experience. He attended a large, modern middle school. He was placed in a beginning-level ESL class for a block of two periods, but he was completely lost in his content area classes taught in English. The textbooks were hard to understand not only because they were in English but also because he lacked background in science, social studies, and math. Daniel wanted to succeed, but he felt completely overwhelmed.

Long-Term English Learners

Long-term English learners (LTELs) are increasingly attracting attention from educators across the country. The 2000 census reveals that over half of the LEP secondary

school children were U.S. born (Fix and Capps 2005). This is disturbing because LTELs are students who have been attending school in this country for six or more years yet still cannot pass English language proficiency tests and be redesignated as fluent English proficient.

These students are generally misunderstood or overlooked. Horwitz and her colleagues (2009), in a Council of Great City Schools report on large urban school districts across the country, state:

> Leaders and staff in each district were quick to point out the specialized needs of adolescent, newcomer students, yet they acknowledge that a majority of the students falling through the cracks are long-term ELLs who have been in the system for years. (29)

Olsen's report (2010b) about the long-term English learners in California has been referred to as "a wake-up call to California educators and policymakers." Olsen expresses concern that so many secondary students, despite many years in California schools and "despite being close to the age in which they should be able to graduate, are still not English proficient and have indeed incurred major academic deficits" (iii). Other states have also expressed concern in different reports about this population of students. For example, in studies of English learners in Texas researchers found that high numbers of struggling Latino students who drop out do not meet eleventh-grade standards in math and reading (McNeil, Coppola, and Radigan 2008; Flores, Bartalova, and Fix 2012).

Menken and colleagues (Menken, Kleyn, and Chae 2012) have studied long-term English learners with colleagues in New York City. They have identified common characteristics of this student population. LTELs are typically found in grades 6–12, speak different languages, and come from different countries. They are often orally bilingual and speak English like a native speaker, but they have limited literacy skills in English and in their native languages. These students perform below grade level in reading and writing and, as a result, struggle with their content-area classes. Usually, these students have low grades, often they have been retained at some point, and they are at high risk of dropping out.

Like Olsen, Menken and Kleyn (2009) report a lack of understanding of these students. They explain that needs of these students are different from those of secondary newcomer ELLs, "yet the language programming at the secondary level is typically for new arrivals [because] most educators are unfamiliar with the specialized needs of this population" (2).

Olsen (2010a) has given specific guidelines for districts to properly identify and then develop appropriate programs for LTELs. Some districts have begun to respond to the guidelines. Los Angeles Unified School District's 2012 Master Plan (LAUSD 2012), for example, has specific guidelines to identify and set up programs to meet

the needs of long-term English learners, but there are still few school districts across the country where these students are identified and provided with programs specific to their needs.

Because there are so many of these long-term English learners, researchers have divided them into subcategories. Menken, Kleyn, and Chae (2007) have listed two main types: (1) transnational students, and (2) students with inconsistent and/or subtractive U.S. schooling. We will discuss each type briefly and provide an example of each.

Vaivén *Transnational Students*

The first group is sometimes referred to as the *vaivén* students because, as the label indicates when translated from Spanish, they "go and come." *Vaivén* students, although primarily U.S. educated, move back and forth between the U.S. and their country of origin. Many of these students also fit into the students with interrupted formal education (SIFE) designation since their schooling is interrupted as they move back and forth.

Carlos is a good example of this type of student. He lives near the Mexico–Texas border. He grew up in Mexico with his mother, Lydia, a single parent. Carlos began school in Matamorros, Mexico. When he was eight, his mother met a Mexican man who had legal residency in the U.S. and lived across the border in Brownsville, Texas. When she got pregnant with his baby, he wanted to get married and have the baby born and educated in the U.S. Carlos and his mother moved to Brownsville, and Carlos started second grade in Texas.

Carlos moved back to Matamorros twice to live with relatives. Once he attended school, but the other time he did not. He says he hates schools in the U.S. and doesn't like his stepfather. Although he tries to impress Mexican friends and relatives with his fluent oral English, he struggles academically in English. At sixteen Carlos is back in Mexico for the third time. He isn't attending school there, and his relatives struggle to support him in hard economic times. He will probably return to Brownsville soon, but one wonders if he will attend school there or not (Freeman and Freeman 2011).

Inconsistent/Subtractive Schooling LTELs

A second type of LTEL is the English language learner with inconsistent and/or subtractive schooling. These students may receive some bilingual instruction, some ESL instruction, or they may have a combination of different services. Often, the supports they receive, even within one district, are not well articulated. Guillermo is a good example of a student who received subtractive/inconsistent schooling.

Guillermo was born in the United States. His parents crossed the border when they were in middle school, but both dropped out of school when they were juniors in high school to get married. His mother is now a waitress and his father is a mechanic. While both of his parents speak English, the language of Guillermo's home before he started school was Spanish.

He started school as a monolingual Spanish speaker in a rural district in southeastern Texas when he was in preschool. The district where he first attended school provided bilingual education until third grade, so he started school with first language support. However, district policies changed so that when Guillermo entered first grade he was mainstreamed into an all-English classroom. He was provided with some ESL support in first grade during an ESL period. In second grade he was pulled out for ESL twice a week, and by third grade he stopped receiving any kind of language support services. Throughout the rest of his elementary and middle school years his instruction was in English only. Spanish was often his social language at home and with his friends.

Now, in ninth grade, Guillermo speaks English and Spanish but he cannot discuss complex ideas or read or write either language at grade level. Teachers are concerned that he might not be able to pass state-mandated exams or the high school exit exam. Guillermo is a typical example of an LTEL who has conversational English but struggles in academic reading and writing. As a result of his inconsistent, subtractive schooling, he has not developed age-appropriate language abilities in his home language or in English. He is not literate in Spanish and has limited English literacy.

Students at Risk of Becoming Long-Term English Learners

Children who begin the primary grades (PreK through third grade) speaking a language other than English don't fit into the first two categories of recent arrivals with adequate schooling or recent arrivals with limited schooling simply because they are just beginning their education and have had little or no previous schooling. They have not been in U.S. schools long enough to be classified as long-term English learners, but these students may be considered as potential long-term English learners. To reduce the number of long-term English learners, it is crucial to identify students at risk of becoming long-term English learners at an early stage in their academic careers and then provide them with the education they need to acquire academic English and academic content knowledge.

For example, if they are placed in a bilingual program, they can build on their first language skills as they learn English. Students in long-term bilingual programs with well-qualified teachers and appropriate materials have much more potential for academic success in English than students in other kinds of programs. On the other hand, if they are placed in a class taught only in English, they are likely to

fall behind. In addition, if they attend schools that are crowded, underfunded, and poorly staffed, their chances for academic success are significantly diminished.

Another factor that influences the success of young English learners is the family situation. If their parents are well educated, financially successful, and socially stable, emergent bilinguals have a good chance of doing well. On the other hand, if children come from families with low levels of education and who struggle economically, they are more likely to become long-term English learners. Schools can work with parents and provide parent education programs. Community and religious organizations can also provide support and services that immigrant families need.

Amira, a Nigerian refugee entering kindergarten in a school on the outskirts of Los Angeles, is a good example of a potential long-term English learner. Her family recently came to California sponsored by a church group. Although English is a language used in school in Nigeria, she never attended school there. Amira only speaks Hausa. There is no support in her first language offered by the school as she is one of only two Hausa speakers in her large elementary school. Amira is having difficulty adjusting to life the U.S. Her parents are still coping with the violence they experienced in Nigeria and are overwhelmed as they go through culture shock and try to adjust to living in a new country. Although the church and refugee services offer some help, the family is not stable financially. Even with excellent support from caring teachers, Amira is a potential long-term English learner.

Virginia teaches second grade in an inner-city neighborhood of Houston, Texas. Many of her students are potential long-term English learners. Although Virginia is bilingual in Spanish and English, she has a class with students who speak five different languages, including Spanish, Nepali, Vietnamese, Mandarin, and Urdu. The families of her students all struggle economically and many have limited educational backgrounds themselves. While the parents want to help, they either do not have the time or the understanding to support their children's academic work.

Virginia has studied second language acquisition and knows that first language support is important, so she tries to draw on her students' first languages and cultures whenever possible. She looks for culturally relevant materials, invites parents to share their culture and language, and tries to employ strategies to make the English input for her students comprehensible. However, she struggles with demands of her administrator to prepare students for the tests and give them frequent benchmark exercises that only frustrate and confuse her students. The ESL pullout teacher tries to support what Virginia is teaching, but it is difficult to plan together and there is never enough time. Despite her efforts, Virginia's students are at risk of becoming long-term English learners.

Although schools are now beginning to develop programs for long-term English learners, there has not been a consistent set of criteria for identifying this group of

students or for reporting their academic progress. Instead, data on LTELs is combined with data on other ELLs. However, recently, state departments of education have begun to require districts to collect data on how many LTELs they serve and on their academic progress.

In California, for example, an LTEL is defined as an English learner who is enrolled in any of grades 6 to 12, has been enrolled in schools in the United States for six years or more, has remained at the same English language proficiency level for two or more consecutive prior years, or has regressed to a lower English language proficiency level, and, for a pupil in any of grades 6 to 9, inclusive, who scored far below basic or below basic on the state English language arts achievement test.

In addition, California defines students at risk of becoming long-term English learners as an English learner who is enrolled in any of grades 3 to 12 in schools in the United States for four to five years, who has scored at the intermediate level or below on the state English language development test, and, for a pupil in any of grades 3 to 9, who scored in the fourth or fifth year at the below basic or far below basic level on the state English language arts achievement test (adapted from proposed Senate Bill 75). The state education department requires districts to collect and post the number of long-term English learners and students at risk of becoming long-term English learners each year.

This move to identify long-term English learners and to monitor their progress should prompt school districts to establish programs that meet the needs of this group of English learners. In addition, by identifying students at risk of becoming long-term English learners, schools can implement early programs to prevent these students from falling further behind in developing English proficiency and academic competence.

We have described four types of English learners. Figure 2–3 summarizes the characteristics of each type.

Language Proficiency of Emergent Bilinguals

In learner-centered classes teachers understand the many factors that influence the academic success of their students. One of these is their academic language proficiency. It was Cummins who first helped educators of emergent bilinguals understand that there are different kinds of language proficiency, conversational language and academic language (Cummins 1979, 1981). We devote a chapter later in this book to academic language development, but it is important for teachers to understand that the language students need to read, write, understand, and talk about the content they study in school is different from the language they use in everyday conversation to communicate in different social contexts.

Newly arrived with adequate schooling	• Recent arrivals (fewer than five years in U.S.) • Typically in grades 2–12 • Adequate schooling in their home country • Literate in their home language • Soon catch up academically • May still score low on standardized tests given in English • Social and economic factors can influence them positively or negatively
Newly arrived with limited formal schooling	• Recent arrivals (fewer than five years in U.S.) • Typically in grades 2–12 • Interrupted or limited schooling in home country • Limited home language literacy • Below grade level in math • Poor academic achievement • Social and economic factors can influence them positively or negatively
Long-term English learners	• Six or more years in the U.S. • Typically in grades 6–12 • Limited literacy in both home language and English • Some may get adequate grades but score low on tests • Struggle with content classes • Often have been retained and are at risk of dropping out • Are transnational students or students with inconsistent/subtractive schooling • Have had ESL or bilingual instruction but no consistent program
Students at risk of becoming long-term English learners	• Students in grades 3–12 who scored intermediate or below on state ELD tests after four to five years • Parents have low levels of education • Parents struggle financially and/or socially

FIGURE 2–3 *Types of English Learners*

Emergent bilinguals usually acquire conversational English fairly quickly. They learn how to ask for things they need, ask where things are, and tell people what they like or need. Cummins conducted research showing it takes about two years to develop conversational language. However, the language emergent bilinguals need to read, write about, and discuss concepts in science, social studies, language arts, and math requires academic language proficiency. Different research studies have concluded that it can take from five to seven years to develop grade-level academic language (Cummins 1981; Collier 1989).

The different types of learners we described vary in their conversational language proficiency. They all have some conversational proficiency in their home language.

Students with adequate schooling have academic language proficiency in their home language as well. However, all English learners are faced with the challenge of developing academic language proficiency in English. Figure 2–4 shows the language proficiency of most students in each group. An × means students have proficiency, an (×) means they may have proficiency, and a 0 means they lack proficiency.

Adequate formal schooling students come to school with both conversational and academic language proficiency in their home languages. They are at grade level in content-area subjects and can read, write, understand, and talk about math, science, social studies, and literature in their home language. While this background is very helpful as they are learning English, these students still need to acquire both conversational English and academic English. Some adequate schooling students studied English before beginning school in this country. For this reason, we put the × in parentheses on the chart. This gives these students a head start with conversational English, but there is usually a great deal they don't understand or cannot say despite that English instruction.

Many well-educated international students we have taught tell us they cannot believe how little they could understand or how uncomfortable they were speaking English even after having studied English many years in their country. Krashen (personal communication) commented that he had reached the intermediate level of proficiency in French when he first went to France. To his disappointment French people don't speak at the intermediate level.

However, despite the frustrations that come from learning to communicate and study in a new language, adequate formal schooling students usually catch up quickly and do better academically than the other types of students. These students have had a *de facto* bilingual education, because they have content knowledge and academic language in their home language that they can transfer to what they are learning in English (Krashen 1999). They know how school works and, although there are differences in schools in different countries, they adapt fairly soon. Despite the success that many adequate schooling students experience, they still need several years to score at grade level on standardized tests of reading in English.

	Conversational Language		Academic Language	
	English	*L1*	*English*	*L1*
Adequate formal schooling	(×)	×	0	×
Limited formal schooling	0	×	0	0
Long term	(×)	(×)	0	0
Potential long term	0	×	0	0

FIGURE 2–4 *Language Proficiency of Types of Learners*

Limited formal schooling students have the conversational proficiency they need for social situations in their home language, but they lack the important background knowledge provided by academic study. These newcomer students need to acquire conversational English, academic English, and academic content knowledge without the academic content background knowledge in their L_1 that adequate formal schooling students have. As a result, the task these students face is much greater. When limited formal schooling students can be provided content instruction in their home language while they learn English, they have a much better chance of success. However, this resource is not always available.

Long-term English learners usually have conversational language in both their home language and their second language. They often speak their first language at home or with peers in informal situations. Sometimes they lose the first language almost completely. For that reason, we put the × in parentheses under conversational language in the home language column for long-term English learners.

LTELs often speak English and their native languages without any kind of accent, and they appear to have oral control of the language. However, when asked to discuss a complex idea, even about their own lives, their vocabulary is limited and they struggle to explain their ideas clearly. For this reason we also put the × in parentheses under English in the chart. More important, they lack grade-level academic language proficiency in both their home language and in English. They have difficulty reading content texts or discussing academic concepts, and they cannot write even simple summaries clearly.

Students at risk of becoming long-term English learners have age-appropriate conversational language proficiency in their home language. However, they are not proficient in conversational English when they start school and, as a result, they are usually behind their native English-speaking classmates in both academic content knowledge and academic English by the time they develop conversational English. These younger students have time to develop proficiency in English and their home language, but school officials must ensure that they are provided with programs and teachers that can support their learning and help them develop their home language as they learn English.

LEARNER-CENTERED TEACHING

The first principle for effective teaching is that teaching should be learner centered. Understanding the differences among types of English learners and their conversational and academic language proficiency as well as their academic content knowledge is an important first step. Teachers we have worked with use different

strategies for finding out about their students. Sometimes teachers give students questionnaires asking them how they feel about reading and writing in English and what their strengths and challenges are. Other times they ask students to interview each other about past schooling experiences and then report back. Teachers also gain important information about their students by reading with them and also by examining writing samples and then conferencing with students. In addition, teachers carefully observe students as they work independently or in small groups. Learner-centered teachers become what Goodman refers to as "kid watchers" (Goodman 1985). They base their instruction on their deep understanding of their students. The more information teachers can gather, the better they are able to help students succeed in school.

Mary's "Sense of Self" Unit

We began this chapter by describing the learner-centered family unit that Alicia, an elementary ESL teacher, developed. We end this chapter with another learner-centered unit. Mary, now a bilingual teacher educator, taught this unit when she was teaching ESL and English in a rural high school in the central valley of California. The school had a large Spanish-speaking population as well as some ESL students who spoke Punjabi or Tagalog. Mary taught one beginning ESL class of newcomers, a second-year ESL class, and regular ninth-grade English classes that included both proficient English speakers and long-term English learners.

Mary had these different classes, the year she taught this unit. She needed to plan in such a way that she could meet the standards for her grade level, challenge her students academically, and involve them in many different reading and writing activities. She had to do this without becoming completely overwhelmed in her planning. Therefore, she organized all her classes around the same basic theme, offering all her students the same kinds of challenging activities while still differentiating instruction to meet the varying language needs of her students. She scaffolded in different ways, supporting newcomers by reading to and with them, doing a preview in Spanish for Spanish speakers, and having students do most work in pairs and groups. She modified the scaffolds for her second-year students. She modeled activities and then had them work in pairs or small groups. She continued to do some preview in Spanish for her Spanish speakers. She found that in her regular English classes many students were long-term English learners, so the careful scaffolds, including many collaborative and hands-on activities she engaged them in, helped these students as well.

Mary created a unit of inquiry called "Developing a Sense of Self" to help her high school students answer the big question, "Who am I?" High school students

are interested in each other. Emergent bilinguals need to understand themselves and their peers and appreciate strengths and differences. Mary based her unit on the state language arts writing standards that called for students to write biographical and autobiographical narratives, to relate a sequence of events and communicate the significance of the events, to locate scenes and incidents in specific places, and to make use of descriptions of appearance, images, and sensory details.

Her theme study, which she taught at the beginning of the year, served other important purposes: it helped Mary's students to set goals for themselves, and it helped Mary get to know her students. As students talked and wrote about themselves and classmates and laid out their goals, Mary gained insight into their lives and their academic strengths and weaknesses. Mary found her students enjoyed this learner-centered theme because the activities focused on them.

Goal Setting

First, Mary asked the students to think about three goals for her class. Mary and the students talked about what goals were, and they brainstormed together what some appropriate goals might be. For each goal, students filled out a sheet answering the questions, "What is your goal?" "What do you need to do to reach this goal?" and "Who can help you?" At the bottom of the sheet, students answered one last question, "What have you done so far this year that relates to your goals?"

José, one of Mary's newcomer ELs, listed his three goals as "finish school," "learnd more english," and "be a nice people." He listed "do my homework," "pay attention," and "come to school" as some of the things he needed to do to accomplish his goals. José put "teacher" and "parents" as people who could help him reach his goals. For the question about what he had done so far, he wrote, "I do my homework. started to work hard and be myself."

Personal Information Interview

After the students completed their goals sheets, Mary had them work in pairs to interview each other. Mary gave them the following questions as an interview guide:

What is your name?

Where were you born?

How many brothers and sisters do you have?

What do you do for fun?

What is your favorite sport? Favorite team?

What is your favorite food?

What is your favorite book?

What is your favorite movie and or TV show?

When you think of English class, what do you think of?

What are your plans for the future?

What is something interesting/unique about you?

The students wrote down their partner's answers and then used this information to introduce their partner to the class.

Coat of Arms

After students had set goals and started to learn about their classmates, Mary organized activities to help them to think about how they were like others and yet were unique. One activity that helped students think about themselves and value their individuality was making a coat of arms. Students drew an empty coat of arms with five quadrants to fill in. In each quadrant they drew a picture that revealed something about themselves. For example, one quadrant was to show "something you do well," another "your greatest success," another "some special place you like to be," another "your favorite musical group," and still another "your dream for your future." After students finished drawing their personal coats of arms, they shared them in pairs. The students showed their coat of arms to their partner and asked the partner to guess what the drawings represented. Then they explained each one. After this, students worked in groups to make a cumulative coat of arms that they shared with the whole class.

Some students in Mary's ESL 1 classes simply drew pictures while others cut out pictures and labeled them. These pictures represented student responses to questions like those above but slightly modified; they included "things I love to do," "my favorite book," "what I want to do in the future," "where I want to live in the future," and "what I like to eat." Students with higher levels of English proficiency also drew but they wrote more in each section rather than simply labeling them. This coat of arms activity provided a scaffold for students, giving them opportunities to use language as they shared how they were the same as or different from their peers. It also provided the background and built vocabulary for other activities requiring more reading and writing in English. Throughout the year students referred back to the coat of arms as a starting point for writing assignments.

"I Am" Poem

Mary followed these introductory projects with a series of other related activities. To help her students prepare to write an autobiographical piece, Mary introduced two activities, an "I Am" poem and an Autobiopoem. Both activities were designed to help students expand their vocabularies by describing sensory details and images. The "I Am" activity asked students to write a poem by completing sentences about themselves (see Figure 2–5). Students only needed to put one or two words to complete each line. For example, the first line has the words "I am" and directs the writer to add two of their characteristics.

Autobiopoem

An extension that builds on this "I Am" poem is the Autobiopoem activity. Students wrote another poem about themselves that

> ### *I Am*
> I am (two characteristics you have)
> I wonder (something you are curious about)
> I hear (something you often hear)
> I see (something/someone you see regularly)
> I want
> I am (repeat first line of poem)
>
> I pretend
> I feel (an emotion you feel sometimes)
> I worry
> I cry (something that makes you sad)
> I am (repeat first line of poem)
>
> I believe
> I dream
> I try
> I hope
> I am (repeat first line of poem)

FIGURE 2–5 *"I Am"*

included more details than the "I Am" poem. On the second line, for instance, students were asked to list four of their traits and the third line asked for names of family members. Several templates for an Autobiopoem are available on various Internet sites. The one Mary used is shown in Figure 2–6.

Mary found that her students enjoyed writing and illustrating both their "I Am" poems and their Autobiopoems. Although students in her ESL classes had some difficulty understanding all the categories and their English was not always standard, they did an excellent job of describing themselves, their wants, and their interests. They were engaged in these projects and wanted to know the English words to describe themselves. They also learned new vocabulary from each other as they shared their poems. They developed both oral and written English as they wrote their poems, discussed them with classmates, and read other students' poems.

Here's Looking at You

To involve her students in writing longer prose pieces, Mary next had her students do another, more complex interview. In this case, as they worked in pairs, they

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Autobiopoem

Follow the directions and you will discover that you are a poet. Write only what is indicated on each line.

Line 1: Your first name
Line 2: Four traits (adjectives) that describe you
Line 3: Son/daughter of . . . or . . . Brother/sister of
Line 4: Who loves (3 people, ideas, or a combination)
Line 5: Who feels (3 sensations)
Line 6: Who finds happiness in (3 items)
Line 7: Who needs (3 items)
Line 8: Who gives (3 items)
Line 9: Who fears (3 items)
Line 10: Who would like to see (3 items)
Line 11: Who enjoys (3 items)
Line 12: Who likes to wear (3 colors or items)
Line 13: Resident of (your city, street, or road name)
Line 14: Your last name

FIGURE 2–6 *Autobiopoem*

filled out a form called "Here's Looking at You" (see Figure 2–7). It includes questions asking for more details from the students' lives, such as "What five words would you use to describe yourself?" "What five words would your mother (father, teacher) use to describe you?" "Tell me about your friends: What do you do? Where do you go?" and "What are your favorite classes? What types of activities do you enjoy?"

Mary's English learners found this activity much more challenging than the previous ones. To help her students succeed, Mary first talked with them about each question to be sure they understood them. Then she had them work in small groups to talk about how they would answer their questions. Finally, she told them that instead of five descriptive words, they could write two or three for now. Then she had students work in pairs to conduct the interviews and write down the answers.

Positive–Negative Graph

One final activity that challenged her students and gave them topics for writing autobiography was the positive–negative graph. To start this activity and to build

Here's Looking at You

1. What five words would you use to describe yourself?

2. What five words would your mother (father, teacher) use to describe you?

3. How do teachers see you (include one who likes you and one who does not, if applicable)?

4. What five words would you use to describe school? Tell me about your experiences in school.

5. Tell me about your friends: What do you do? Where do you go?

6. In school what are some of your strongest abilities?

7. Out of school what are your strongest abilities?

8. What are your favorite classes? What types of activities do you enjoy?

9. What abilities do your parents admire most about you?

10. Describe how you get along with others at school and at home.

11. If you had a chance to be part of a group or to be an individual, which would you choose and why?

12. What is your greatest accomplishment at this time?

FIGURE 2–7 *Here's Looking at You*

upon the interviews students had conducted, Mary had students list ten important events in their lives. She found students needed some support with this activity, so she listed ten events in her life. She then demonstrated how she would place these events on a positive–negative graph. She drew a vertical line on the whiteboard and divided it by an intersecting horizontal line. On the horizontal line she marked approximate ages when the events in her life took place. On the vertical line she numbered from plus-one to plus-five from the middle to the top. Next, she numbered from minus-one to minus-five numbering down. She then wrote in key events in her life from her list and evaluated how positive or how negative each was. For example, she marked her move to Mexico City as minus-3 because there was a definite adjustment she had to make. Her wedding day was marked as a plus-five.

Following Mary's modeling, her students made their own list of ten important events in their lives and then placed them on a positive–negative graph of their own. Needing to make a judgment about how positive or negative an event was encouraged students to really think about their lives and the events that had

influenced them. Figure 2–8 is a sample positive–negative graph from one of Mary's students. For this student, "Passed 9th" was quite high, but "grandma passed away" was low.

After this, Mary asked them to write two paragraphs about themselves using the information from their previous projects: the interviews, the coat of arms, the "I Am" poem and "Autobiopoem," the "Here's Looking at You" activity, and the positive–negative graph. Even Mary's beginning ESL students could write something about themselves, a task that would not have been possible without the earlier activities.

Areli wrote the following description. Although this piece has some errors, Areli tells readers some important things about herself:

> My name is Areli Alonso. I am very happy and romantic. My mother says that I am beauty and responsable. I have a lot of friends but my best friends name is Carmen. My other importants friends are my mother and my sister. My ability out of school is to be friendly. My parents tell me I am intelligent.
>
> In school I have the ability of understand easy. I like my school because the people are very kind. My favorite classes are Biology, Geography and sometimes English. I want to learn this year too much.
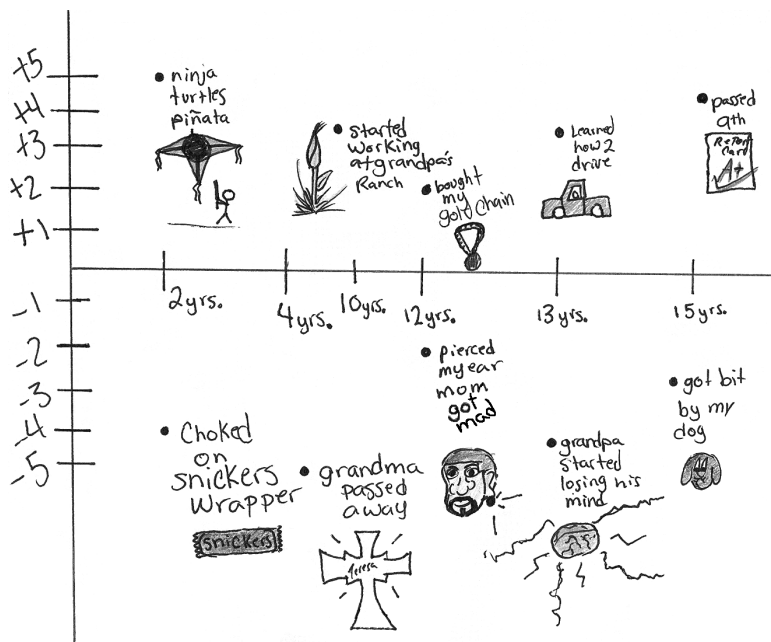
FIGURE 2–8 *Positive–Negative Life Graph*

Areli's writing showed that she was developing proficiency in English. Mary knew that it was important to help her students move toward standard English, but she recognized that it was also important not to overwhelm them. Mary asked her students to look at only one or two items for each piece they wrote. For example, Areli makes nouns and adjectives agree (importants friends); this shows a transfer from Spanish. She also capitalizes names of school subjects, such as biology, again a transfer from Spanish. Mary might do a minilesson on these two points and ask students to look for these two kinds of errors in their writing. She has students keep track of the errors they make and list them in a notebook along with the correct form. Before students begin the next writing piece, they review what they have corrected before to help them avoid making the same kinds of writing errors again.

English learners gain confidence in their abilities to write when they can produce extended text after a very short time in the U.S. The various activities Mary engaged the students in served as scaffolds for Mary's newcomer students and gave them the vocabulary and skills they needed to write a short composition in their new language. Mary's native English speakers and more advanced ESL students also benefited from these kinds of activities. Their paragraphs were full of rich details.

Mary followed up these activities with relevant readings and further discussions and writing, so students continued to increase their academic English proficiency. By the end of the unit they could all write an autobiography, although there were clear differences among the newcomers, the second-year ESL students, and the mainstream English students.

CONCLUSION

The first principle for effective teaching for emergent bilinguals is that teaching should be learner centered. The key for making lessons learner centered is to know your students. By reviewing students' cumulative folders, as well as through observations, surveys and interviews, and reading and writing conferences, teachers can learn a great deal about their students. This is easier when teachers have a self-contained classroom and more difficult when a teacher works with five classes a day; but in either case, over time teachers can get to know their students. Alicia worked with one group of students while Mary worked with five classes each day. Both teachers designed activities that would help them learn more about their students and would help their students learn more about each other.

Getting to know emergent bilinguals includes assessing their conversational and academic English and their subject matter knowledge in both their home language and English. This information can be used to plan lessons and find materials and texts that connect with students' backgrounds so that they can build

new knowledge on their existing knowledge. During lessons, students work independently, in pairs, and in small groups. They engage in projects, conduct research, and share the results with the class. They often become the experts on a topic. In a learner-centered class, both the teacher and the students have important ideas and knowledge to share. Figure 2–9 lists the characteristics of a teacher in a learner-centered class.

In a learner-centered class the teacher:

- Uses a number of sources and activities to learn about her students, including their previous schooling and home language literacy.
- Learns about students' families, cultural background, and experiences.
- Plans units and lessons that draw on student's backgrounds, including their languages and cultures.
- Helps students make connections between the academic content and their own experiences.
- Engages students in collaborative activities, projects, and research so that students can become experts in the subject being studied.
- Has students share their work in pairs, small groups, or with the whole class to help them learn and show that they are the experts.

FIGURE 2–9 *The Teacher's Role in a Learner-Centered Classroom*

APPLICATIONS

1. Alicia's first-grade unit on families and Mary's high school unit on sense of self were both learner centered. Make a list of specific ways the units centered on the students.
2. A key to learner-centered instruction is knowing your students. We described four kinds of English learners: adequate formal schooling students, limited formal schooling students, long-term English learners, and potential long-term English learners. In your school or classroom, identify an emergent bilingual who fits each of these categories and give reasons for your choice.
3. Choose an emergent bilingual student with whom you have contact in school or outside of school. Interview that student. What type of English learner is he/she? Be specific and list the evidence you used to make your decision. Write a description of the student similar to the examples provided in the chapter.

4. Specific activities that were learner centered were described in this chapter. Choose two and implement them with English learners. Report back.

5. Choose one unit of study you have taught or observed that was learner centered. Be prepared to describe the unit and explain what made it learner centered.