Ms. Wright shows an illustrated book about the farm to her first-grade students. “The tractor went up and down the rows of corn,” she reads. Later in the morning, she checks in with her students about the story and finds that at least one of her English learners has an image of the tractor bouncing up and down like a ball on the ground.

Ramón, a fourth-grade student, studies his reading passage intently to understand the sentence, “The cat knew nothing besides hunting birds and mice.” He wonders, “Wouldn’t it be dangerous for the birds and mice to be beside the cat?”

The previous two vignettes demonstrate the importance of a deep knowledge of English vocabulary and grammatical structures in order for students to be successful in their literacy learning. Literacy achievement in English is highly dependent on a rich language foundation that allows students to comprehend the words, sentences, and passages of the texts they are reading and writing. This chapter examines the complexity of language development for English learners, helps teachers gain insights into their students’ language abilities, and provides them with ways to incorporate powerful instructional routines for teaching and practicing essential language skills.

Over the past two decades there has been a tremendous rise in the number of English learners in U.S. elementary schools, increasing from 2
million students in 1993–1994 to 3 million in 1999–2000; in the 2003–2004 school year, 13.3% of enrolled elementary public school students were classified as limited English proficient (LEP; Strizek, Pittsonberger, Riordan, Lyter, & Orlofsky, 2006). Because of this growth, many teachers now serve students who are learning English as a new language. Each teacher deserves support in understanding the skills and needs of his or her students and in using effective teaching strategies. Today, vast majorities of English learners are taught to read using the same instructional materials as their native English-speaking peers and are held to the same achievement expectations. Often, students are assessed on standardized tests in English regardless of their level of English proficiency and after only a short period of time in American schools (Solórzano, 2008). Increased accountability measures add pressure to accelerate achievement in English. For all students to meet high academic expectations, it is critical that teachers have a wide range of tools that help them match instruction to students’ current skills and push students ahead to meet established benchmarks.

English learners face a daunting task. While learning grade-level subject-matter content, they must gain a multifaceted knowledge of the English language, including:

- Phonology, rhythm, cadence
- Vocabulary (basic, general utility, low utility/content specific)
- Syntax (word order)
- Language forms (structures, verb tenses, grammar)
- Functions of language use for both social and academic purposes
- Formal and informal discourse styles for speaking and writing
- Cultural contexts

Students learning English as a second language must learn every word and sentence combination that native English speakers have spent thousands of hours internalizing during their early childhoods. This must be done in a condensed time frame, and often only during the hours a student is in school. Additionally, students must learn the content language being taught in their reading and writing materials. This includes not only the conceptual and concrete language taught in the current year but also the foundational vocabulary taught in each previous year. Consider what it takes to learn abstract concepts such as “plot,” ideas such as “loyalty,” and techniques such as “predicting” in a second language.

English is rich in idioms and figurative language. English learners must learn both the literal and idiomatic meanings of hundreds of sayings and expressions that native English speakers use on a daily basis, such as “knowing the ropes” or “put your best foot forward,” which pepper
everyday speech, literature, and informational text. They must do this while keeping pace with native English-speaking peers who are rapidly increasing their knowledge of the English language inside and outside the classroom and applying that knowledge to subject-matter learning.

In examining research on the reading performance of English learners, Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, and Christian (2005) found that students with well-developed oral skills in English experience greater success in English reading. National data highlight the fact that a disturbing number of students learning English do poorly in literacy tasks requiring academic language proficiency; for example, results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress show that 72% of LEP students are performing below the basic level on the fourth-grade reading assessment (U.S. Department of Education, 2003). And the gap in achievement between English learners and peers who are native speakers of Standard American English persists through the secondary schools. This has led many to conclude that quality content instruction in English is not sufficient to ensure that English learners gain academic proficiency (Saunders, Foorman, & Carlson, 2006). Without explicit instruction in English and how it works—vocabulary, word usage, grammatical features, and syntactical structures—the most effective support for content learning may be insufficient. Academic achievement will be accelerated when students are proficient in English. We suggest that, like other complex learning, this requires systematic and explicit instruction. Educators and districts report a continuing need for cohesive information about how to plan, teach, and monitor progress in meeting the needs of their linguistically diverse students (Datnow, Lasky, Stringfield, & Teddlie, 2005).

This chapter is designed to provide background information about the importance of academic language instruction and to help educators design effective programs to teach English learners the language that they will not learn outside of schools, may not be taught in other subject areas, and need to be able to use every day.

**LEARNING ENGLISH**

How quickly and efficiently an English learner progresses in developing proficiency in a second language depends on a number of factors, including his or her level of language and literacy development in the primary language, time spent in U.S. schools, type of instructional program, age, individual experiences, and, very importantly, quality of instruction (Genesee et al., 2005; Geva, 2006). It is common for many students to have acquired a great deal of oral English through experiences in school
and the community and to appear fluent. They have gleaned some important vocabulary, grammatical structures, conventions, and rules of discourse from many interactions. But these students often have tremendous gaps in knowledge of how the English language works.

**Academic Language**

As students move up through the grades, the language demands increase rapidly. Sentence constructions are longer and more complex, vocabulary less concrete. Problems in reading and writing in the later grades often stem from limited vocabulary and syntactic knowledge of English (Garcia, 2000). Even children who are quite skilled orally in social situations can have these gaps. They are missing a deep and rich vocabulary and proficiency in the structures and vocabulary needed to compare, describe, predict, and persuade in English; students are unable to easily select a word appropriate to an academic topic they are discussing. In short, they need to develop the language to express their conceptual thinking—the language of academic success. Cummins (2003) contrasts academic language proficiency with conversational fluency, based on the use of less frequent vocabulary words, complex syntax, and abstract expressions unlikely to be heard in everyday conversations. Without this deep understanding of English, students are constrained academically, frustrating themselves and their teachers. This can be especially problematic in how we understand students of immigrant backgrounds who have attended U.S. schools for years, appear acculturated, and are comfortable using English in most settings. These students do not on the surface appear to need specific instruction in language. However, their verbal fluency often masks their instructional needs.

**Who Are English Learners?**

English learners may be characterized by a number of different profiles—recent arrivals, long-term learners, and learners of standard forms of English. Recent arrivals to the United States may bring strong literacy skills in their home languages, and these languages may be quite similar to, or very different from, the English writing system. Other recent immigrants may bring very limited literacy skills in their home languages and little to no formal schooling experiences. Long-term English learners may include students who have lived their entire lives in the United States. Some of these students possess strong English language and literacy skills with a few gaps. Others have low literacy skills, and although they seem to have strong oral English skills, there are many holes in their academic language repertoires. Finally, learners of standardized English include students who
are primarily English speaking but have been designated Limited English Proficient (LEP) or English-only students who speak a nonstandard dialect. The range of skills and background experiences of students must be taken into account when considering the types of instructional programs that will be most effective with students learning English.

**Key Ideas in Understanding Students’ English Language Development**

Before describing our suggestions for how to structure explicit language instruction in elementary classrooms, we would like to share several foundational concepts in language development theory on which our ideas rest. These include the multiple facets of language that students are required to internalize and the importance of both instruction and opportunities for practice when learning a new language.

Language may be thought of as being composed of many different aspects: (1) phonology, how the individual sounds are expressed in a language; (2) morphology, the way meaningful chunks make up individual words; (3) syntax, how words are put together into sentences; (4) semantics, how meaning is communicated; and (5) pragmatics, the social/interaction aspects of language (Trumbull & Farr, 2005). Much of how we learn to speak our home language happens effortlessly and almost invisibly. It is only when we manipulate a new language that many of these subcomponents of language take center stage; for example, when we have difficulty sounding like native speakers (phonology), putting words in the correct order (syntax), or using the appropriate language in a certain social context (pragmatics). Each language also has a lexicon, or corpus of words, that it contains. Knowing the meanings of these individual words, or vocabulary knowledge, is another important component of language development that continues to grow throughout our lifetimes.

Another way to look at language development is through the model of *communicative competence* (e.g., Canale & Swain, 1980). Communicative competence implies that a person is able to effectively use language for specific purposes in particular settings, using the words, the grammar, the social knowledge, and the discourse competence to put all of the linguistic information together. For example, communicative competence might be demonstrated by ordering food at a restaurant, by discussing a book you read, or by writing a paper on the migration patterns of geese. Communicative competence will likely look very different depending on the task at hand. As educators, it is our goal to prepare students to demonstrate communicative competence with academic reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks that match the expectations of the grade-level curriculum standards.
Many models of second-language acquisition exist that help us understand the complexity of learning a new language from various perspectives: cultural, social, cognitive, and linguistic (Trumbull & Farr, 2005). Research on effective instructional models for second-language acquisition is sorely lacking. In their review of the literature, Genesee and colleagues (2005) found only one empirical study examining the effects of instructional practice on students’ oral English proficiency. They did, however, describe the self-perpetuating nature of English language development: The more students learn, the more they use what they know, and, in turn, the more possibilities exist for learning more through language interactions. Their research review also studied language use in and outside of school and found that there is little evidence that merely being exposed to English is a sufficient way for students to develop advanced levels of English language proficiency (Genesee et al., 2005). For this reason, explicit instruction to help students learn, as well as structured opportunities for them to practice, English are crucial for developing academic language proficiency with second-language learners.

STRUCTURING LANGUAGE LEARNING

Academic success depends on learning to read well. Learning to read well depends on rich language knowledge. Explicit language instruction helps ensure that English learners gain the knowledge they need to be academically successful. By academic success we mean that the reader must extract meaning and information from texts; evaluate evidence and relate it to other ideas and information; recognize and analyze textual conventions used in various genres; and use textual cues to interpret and infer authors’ intentions. These academic benchmarks make it clear that achieving full proficiency in English includes far more than mere fluency in conversation or everyday uses of language. Proficiency means that students must know English well enough to be “fully competitive in academic uses of English with their age equivalent, native-speaking peers” (Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000; p. 3).

According to Title III requirements, regardless of the type of program in which an English learner is enrolled, each student must receive instruction in English at his or her level of English proficiency, as well as meaningful access to grade-level academic content (Castañeda v Pickard, 1981). We know this, but how do we put it into practice?

Important questions surface concerning how to provide appropriate accommodations for students not yet academically proficient in English. There are several approaches to increasing success in subject-matter content taught in English. One short-term method is to incorporate sheltered
instructional techniques to make the material understandable (cf. Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; Diaz-Rico & Weed, 2002). Another related strategy is to explicitly teach the academic language that students need to express content learning orally and in writing (Dutro & Moran, 2003).

We propose an instructional blueprint for English learners that provides a comprehensive view of instruction and outlines a model to ensure that English learners are taught appropriately throughout the day. In this model there are two purposes for instruction: English language development (ELD) and explicit language for content. Planning a lesson always begins with the end in mind: What is the purpose of communication, or the language function, to be practiced in the lesson? English-as-a-second-language instruction driven by the proficiency level of the student is taught during dedicated Systematic ELD Instruction time. Additionally, English is taught in the context of each subject area through explicit language for content. This language instruction is driven by the need of the content area—that is, the language that enables students to think, discuss, read, and write about the topic at hand. Comprehensible delivery ensures that content instruction is clear, sequential, and scaffolded.

The types of instruction outlined in the blueprint must be provided within an inclusive, culturally responsive learning environment that recognizes and builds on the value of the language, culture, and experiences of each student (see also Chapters 2 and 11, this volume). Each component of the instructional blueprint is essential to a well-designed program for English learners. None is sufficient on its own: Systematic ELD instruction supports success in content areas by strengthening language skills, but on its own it will not ensure meaningful access to the curriculum. Explicit language for content does not provide sufficient language instruction to ensure a solid foundation because it does not follow a scope and sequence of language skills and may leave gaps in language knowledge. In the rest of this chapter, we describe how the instructional blueprint provides a framework for explicit language and literacy instruction in elementary classrooms, and we present several sample activities.

FOCUSED APPROACH
TO EXPLICIT LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION

A focused approach to explicit language instruction involves attention to three critical strands: functions, forms, and fluency. Functions of language are the tasks that learners must engage in as they use English purposefully (Halliday, 1973). These include social tasks such as participating in conversations or asking for directions, as well as academic tasks such as drawing conclusions or making generalizations. The forms of
language are the discourse and grammatical tools necessary for communicating at many levels in English (Doughty & Williams, 1998). These tools include using the correct word order, subject-verb agreement, verb tenses, pronouns and articles, and so on. We refer to fluency as the accurate and fluent use of language that English learners develop when they have numerous opportunities to practice. Fluency is enhanced with clear modeling of vocabulary and language patterns, structured peer practice with the language being taught, and frequent and varied opportunities to apply the new language both orally and in writing.

Vocabulary knowledge can be considered a component of the language tool. Students need familiarity with a wealth of words in order to communicate in school settings. Some vocabulary words can be described as “brick” words—they are the words needed to talk about a topic (Dutro & Moran, 2003). Brick words range from basic to general use to highly specialized, such as the words dry, arid, and evapotranspiration. To continue with the construction metaphor, “mortar” is the functional language that is required to generate connected speech and print (Dutro & Moran, 2003). It is grammar in action and helps humans move beyond speaking in single words and phrases. Figure 3.1 presents examples of brick and mortar words and illustrates their importance within the focused approach.

Students need to be able to use functional, or mortar, words to express relationships and construct sentences. Mortar words and phrases are the parts of the sentence that organize the bricks to express an intended meaning. Mortar words and phrases may describe attributes or locations, such as have, are usually, next to; they may express actions, such as is, was, weren’t; they may help us inquire, such as what, when, why is; and much more. Without the mortar, we have a list of vocabulary words (or a pile of bricks). Once we decide what we want to communicate, we use our knowledge of grammar and syntax to construct sentences and paragraphs that convey our meaning.

To understand brick and mortar words better, we examine a young readers’ story that is included in the third-grade component of a common basal textbook. The text, Seal Surfer, tells the story of a relationship that develops between a boy and a seal in an ocean town over the course of several years (Foreman, 2003). In order to understand this story well, a student needs to know many basic brick words (e.g., beach, grandson, seal, fish, sun, wind, etc.), many general brick words (e.g., injured, bunting, upward, plunged, surface, etc.), and some specialized brick words (e.g., mussels, Beethoven, corkscrewing, buffeted, quay).

In addition to understanding the meaning of the words in the story, English learners also need to decipher complex syntactical structures that are included. Take, for example, the following sentence: “As he con-
**Language Functions**

Purposes for using language to:
- Perform cognitive tasks
- Express thinking orally and in writing
- Inform text structure (common are bolded below)
- Engage in social and academic conversation

Relevance to EL instruction:

What are some of the communicative purposes English learners must be able to navigate?
What language functions do cognitive tasks require? What text structures must students comprehend?

- Participate in discussions
- Express social courtesies
- Give/follow directions
- Predict
- Express action and time relationships
- Express needs, likes, and feelings
- Draw conclusions
- Clarify
- Classify and compare/contrast
- Describe, explain, and elaborate
- Make generalizations
- Sequence
- Express cause/effect
- Proposition/support
- Summarize

**Language Tools**

What language tools are needed to communicate for different purposes? What language is needed to comprehend text and express thinking orally and in writing?

**Mortar**

Functional words and phrases in sentence structures that allow us to generate a range of statements and questions for different functions.
Requires knowledge of grammatical features, syntax, conventions for formal/informal use, and the ability to use varied and complex sentences.

- would have liked to
- has been
- was beginning to
- given that
- are usually/tend to
- may have been
- didn’t have/want/know
- in the case of

**Bricks**

Topic-specific words and phrases needed to talk about that topic.
This vocabulary may include specific nouns and adjectives, verbs and adverbs related to a theme or subject. These words and phrases may be basic, general use, or specialized, such as:

- Basic: tree, elbow, art, force, shoes, skull, dry, donate
- General: debate, government, and, empathy, mammal
- Specialized: War of Independence, incisor, germinate, archetype, integer, carburetor

**Instruction & Application**

After analysis, how are language tools introduced, modeled, and practiced using I/We/You Do It? What opportunities for structured interaction are provided for students to practice the language they are learning? How are students supported in gaining oral and written fluency?

- Ease of comprehension (listening and reading) and production (speaking and writing)
- Automaticity in reading and writing
- Facility of language use for a wide range of purposes
- Appropriateness of discourse style and register demanded by situation

centrated on watching her, the wave he was riding suddenly broke and plunged him headfirst off his board" (Foreman, 2003, p. 58). We see that, even focusing on a single sentence of the story, students are required to disentangle meaning not only from the numerous brick and mortar words but also from complex sentence structures and verb tenses. To comprehend the passage, students need to break the sentence into several simpler meaningful phrases, such as, “He concentrated on watching her. The wave broke (crashed). This caused him to plunge head first off of his board.” Students need to know that a surfer can “ride” a wave, that this wave can “break” or crash, and that it can cause a person to be “plunged” deep into the water. Clearly, knowledge of the forms of language is critical to students’ literacy achievement.

To be successful, students must first be able to accurately and automatically decode the text. They must have knowledge of the word meanings and be able to follow the sentence structure. Often, students need specialized background knowledge to make sense of a text, in this case, knowledge about the ocean, its waves, and the context of surfing. Students also must be motivated to read the text for a purpose, whether personal or academic. Teachers are wise to examine each text that is presented to English learners and consider what linguistic, academic, and motivational knowledge students will need to bring to the task.

Students bring a wide range of oral English knowledge with them to the classroom. This proficiency is often measured with a standardized assessment such as the Language Assessment Scales—Oral (LAS-O; DeAvila & Duncan, 1994) or the California English Language Development Test (CELDT; California Department of Education, 2003). Based on the results of their oral assessment, students may be classified at the beginning or early-intermediate proficiency level, the intermediate proficiency level, or the advanced proficiency level (California Department of Education, 1999). Table 3.1 provides an overview of some of the characteristics and instructional objectives for students at each of these levels of oral proficiency. As noted in Table 3.1, students progress from very limited expressive skills in English at the beginning level to an understanding of the subtleties and purposes of complex language use by the advanced proficiency level. One of the roles of the teacher is to facilitate students' language production across various levels of proficiency. In other words, teachers identify what language is essential for students to further develop their language proficiency. Teachers then find appropriate sentence frames to help students practice the topical language at increasingly more challenging linguistic levels based on students’ capabilities in English. For example, while studying how to distinguish fact from opinion, a teacher might set up three linguistic structures to aid students at varying levels of English proficiency. To answer the question “What facts and opinions
TABLE 3.1. English Proficiency Levels and Objectives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proficiency level</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Objectives for student language use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beginning to early</td>
<td>• Progress from having little receptive or productive English to a basic use</td>
<td>• Move from nonverbal to single-word or short-phrase responses to longer oral responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>intermediate</td>
<td>• Have limited use of written English, primarily using high-frequency words and</td>
<td>• Replicate language structures that have been taught and practiced, such as survival/functional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>previously learned material</td>
<td>vocabulary, present, progressive, or negative verbs and descriptive adjectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Need many repetitions and concrete experiences to internalize vocabulary,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>language patterns, and concepts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>• Comprehend information on familiar topics and can engage in expanded</td>
<td>• Develop longer oral and written responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>conversation</td>
<td>• Build sentences with adjectives and adverbs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can work independently with a variety of print</td>
<td>• Work with compound sentences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Can write basic information and extended responses, especially with sentence</td>
<td>• Expand the use of verb tenses, including future, past, and perfect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>frames as scaffolds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>• Use English in complex academic arenas</td>
<td>• Expand the use of verb tenses, including the past perfect and conditional tenses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehend detailed information in abstract topics with limited contextual</td>
<td>• Build complex sentences with transitional phrases and conjunctions, as well as prepositional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>clues</td>
<td>phrases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Have advanced vocabulary knowledge</td>
<td>• As appropriate to developmental level, work with morphological layers of the language, including</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Recognize language subtexts in multiple contexts and for varied social and</td>
<td>Greek and Latin roots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>academic purposes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

were presented in this book about wolves?”, an advanced learner might be presented with the sentence frame: “In this book we learned the fact that ______ and the opinion that some hold that ______.” (In this book we learned the fact that wolves live in packs and the opinion that some hold that wolves are always hungry.) An intermediate learner might be asked, “What are some facts and opinions about wolves?” “Facts about wolves are that they ______ and ______. Opinions about wolves are that
they _____ and ______.” (Facts about wolves are that they live in packs and eat meat. Opinions about wolves are that they are always hungry and are very smart.) A beginning/early-intermediate learner might be asked, “What is a fact about wolves? What do some people think about wolves?” “A fact is that ______. Some people think wolves ______.” (A fact is that wolves eat meat. Some people think wolves are mean.) By scaffolding the language frames to match students’ linguistic abilities, teachers provide all students the opportunities to engage in the academic content (fact vs. opinion) at a comprehensible level.

Another example of providing linguistic support and challenge to students at varying levels of proficiency is demonstrated in the following writing task for a cooking project. Students are asked to write a note about what they need to conduct the project. Advanced learners are provided with the sentence frame, “In order to make _____, we need the following items: _____.” (In order to make pancakes, we need the following items: flour, milk, and eggs.) Intermediate learners are provided with the sentence frame, “We need to buy _____ to make ______.” (We need to buy flour, milk, and eggs to make pancakes.) Beginning/early-intermediate learners are provided with the sentence frame, “We need _____ and ______.” (We need flour, milk, and eggs.)

Some Essentials of Language Teaching

How do teachers structure their classroom lessons to help English learners access the content and also practice important language structures? First, clarify the purpose of the lesson. Consider whether the lesson is part of a Systematic ELD program or an example of explicit language for content. For example, a Systematic ELD lesson will progress along a scope and sequence of language skills determined by students’ current level of proficiency, such as using prepositions inside, outside, and next to. An explicit-language-for-content lesson will focus on bridging students’ English language knowledge with the demands of an upcoming lesson, such as learning the brick-and-mortar vocabulary associated with an informational text on electricity that students will read and write about. An explicit-language-for-content lesson may also focus on scaffolding the content so that students can understand given their current level of English proficiency, such as the teacher’s helping students write a short biography of a favorite author. Depending on which type of lesson is being designed, the objectives will vary.

We share an example of an explicit-language-for-content lesson. One purpose of this type of lesson is to front-load language and background
knowledge to help students meet the cognitive and linguistic demands of the upcoming content instruction. For this kind of lesson the teacher will most likely be working with instructional materials that have been adopted by the school to meet the academic standards in literacy. Let’s say the lesson involves reading a nonfiction book about food chains and food webs. The teacher’s manual points out that during this lesson students will learn about a common expository text structure—sequence and time relationships. To plan an explicit-language lesson that will help the students understand the forthcoming content instruction, the teacher first considers the function of the language in the content instruction: Will it be used to perform a cognitive task, to express thinking, to inform text structure, or to engage in academic conversation? In our current example, the purpose of the lesson is academic; the focus of the language being studied is sequence and time relationships (as evidenced within a text structure). Understanding that expository text frequently describes sequence and time relationships is an important concept for tackling new texts and will help students be more discerning readers and writers.

Next, the teacher examines the language demands of the lesson: What is the purpose or function of the language? To classify or compare characteristics, describe actions, show a sequence, express cause and effect, or support a proposition? In this case, it is to express sequence. In the analysis of the language demands, we need to start with the function, then move to the topic vocabulary. In the text on food chains and webs, students will need to know some key vocabulary that may be unfamiliar, such as habitat, organism, predator, and prey, or to understand new meanings for known words, such as producer or consumer. They will be asked to express the sequence of who eats what in what order, so sequencing words such as first, second, third, next, and so forth, will be very important. The teacher plans to front-load sentence frames such as “First, the _____ eats the ______. Second, the _____ eats the _____.

Third the _____ eats the ______. And so on.” (First the beetle eats the grass. Second, the small bird eats the beetle. Third, the hawk eats the small bird. And so on.)

To implement an explicit-language lesson, teachers:

- Set the scene by engaging students in a meaningful context for language learning: “We will be finding out about how animals survive by finding the food they need to eat, and figuring out what happens first, second, and next.”
- Link to prior knowledge by building on students’ experiences or previous academic learning: “What animals have you seen or studied about? What do they eat? What eats them?”
• Teach and practice “brick” vocabulary: “A predator is the hunter, a prey what it catches to eat. The hawk is a predator of smaller birds and mice.”

• Provide opportunities for students to practice the vocabulary: “Tell your partner about a predator and a prey that you know.”

• Teach and practice language patterns: “Look at the chart we made about a food chain. Tell us what the animals eat in the order of smallest to biggest. First the ______ eats the _______. Second the ______ eats the _______. And so on.”

• Provide a real-life context for students to apply the new vocabulary and language patterns: “Draw a picture of a food chain. Write about what each animal eats underneath its picture. Share your chart with a friend.”

To plan an explicit-language instruction lesson, consider following the format of “I do—We do—You do.” Table 3.2 provides an overview of the components and their pacing. As noted in Table 3.2, the “I do” section of the lesson involves explicit teaching, during which time the teacher models and explains how to use the new language. The “We do” section allows students to practice the new language in a structured context, with close monitoring by the teacher. In the “You do” section of the lesson students work more independently to apply the language patterns in more natural contexts.

Tools for Explicit Language Instruction

Teachers need many tools in their repertoires to support them in conducting meaningful language instruction in literacy. In the next section, we outline three examples of teaching practices that are useful in delivering effective language lessons.

Visuals for Topic Vocabulary

One way to support students in reading and writing as they learn new vocabulary is to create a posted collection of topic vocabulary words matched with illustrative sketches called an Illustrated Word Bank. The purpose of Illustrated Word Banks is to comprehensively teach vocabulary and concepts while creating a resource for students to use throughout ELD lessons on that topic. By connecting a visual to the vocabulary taught, teachers provide the context to help students remember new words. An example of an Illustrated Word Bank is a chart of common businesses in the community. In this business-oriented Illustrated Word Bank, there might be pictures of a department store, a music store, a jew-
TABLE 3.2. The Flow of a Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Pacing</th>
<th>Procedure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Setting the context</td>
<td>4-6 min</td>
<td>Set the scene by engaging students in a meaningful context for language learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Link to prior knowledge by building on students’ experiences or connect to the previous lesson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do</td>
<td>5-7 min</td>
<td>Model how to use the vocabulary and language patterns with support of graphic organizers and sentence frames</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I-We do</td>
<td>8-12 min</td>
<td>Model and monitor students for accuracy as they practice in small groups and with partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Use structured routines to engage students and ensure that everyone is participating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You do</td>
<td>10-15 min</td>
<td>Provide opportunities for student-generated language practice in small groups, partnerships, and individually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrap-up and reflection</td>
<td>3-5 min</td>
<td>Ask students to summarize what they have learned and restate the lesson objective</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

clery store, a hair salon, a shoe store, a bookstore, and a bakery. The word bank could also include pictures of items that might be purchased at each business, such as a dress, a book, a necklace, a pair of shoes, a CD, a loaf of bread, and a bottle of shampoo.

Students refer to the Illustrated Word Bank when they need to be reminded of the vocabulary word for each place, or when they need to write the word. The Illustrated Word Bank may also be used as a framework for an explicit-language lesson when language patterns for asking and answering questions are added. In our example, a note card is posted that provides the following question and answer: “What do people buy at _____? They buy _____ at ______.” (What do people buy at a music store? They buy a CD at a music store.) Another language pattern that could be used with this Illustrated Word Bank is: “Where is (are) you (he, she, they, it, we) going to go? _____ going to go to the ______.” (Where is he going to go? He’s going to go to the bookstore.) Additional scaffolding is provided by color-coding a list of words (I’m, you’re, he’s, she’s, we’re, they’re) and highlighting the spot in the language pattern at which one of these words belongs. For students at more advanced levels of English proficiency, the language pattern for this Illustrated Word Bank may be: “Why is (are) he (you, she, it, they, we) going to go to ______? Because _____ is (are) going to buy ______.” (Why are we going to go to the bakery? Because we are going to buy bread.)

To prepare an Illustrated Word Bank, first identify a list of words or concepts to be taught and gather pictures of the target words. You can
use pictures from magazines, make photocopies, draw them yourself, or take photographs. Identify a spot to hang your Illustrated Word Bank. You can put a piece of butcher paper on the wall or put picture cards in a hanging pocket chart. Have tape or pins ready for posting or cards with the labels printed if you are using a pocket chart. You may also want to make extra word cards for students to use when practicing the language patterns with each other.

To teach vocabulary using the Illustrated Word Bank, consider the following procedures:

1. “I do it.”—Introduce each word orally and either post the picture and label it or tape the picture onto the butcher paper and write its label nearby. As you do this, explain the meaning of the word or phrase in student-friendly language and give an example or two to provide context. Students chorally repeat key words and phrases after each one is posted or traced.

2. “We do it.”—For intermediate and above students, stop periodically and prompt the students to turn to a partner and tell what they have learned so far, as you monitor their exchanges. A prompt may be “Tell your partner what _____ means,” or provide them a sentence stem to complete, such as “A department store is a place that sells ______.” For beginners and early-intermediate students, you might have them chorally complete a sentence with a familiar pattern, such as “This is a ______,” “I see/have/know a ______,” or “A ______ has/can ______.” Then have them repeat to a partner (first Partner A, then B).

On subsequent days, you may revisit the Illustrated Word Bank with labeled picture cards or word/phrase cards (depending on grade level of students) in different ways. Distribute one word card to each student, reading each one as you go. Review the vocabulary on the Illustrated Word Bank, having students listen for their word and put their card over the matching one on the chart. Some suggestions, listed by increasing difficulty, are:

• **Beginning**—Say the word/phrase (e.g., *bookstore*)

• **Early intermediate**—Provide a prompt with a sentence stem: “My card is a ______” Or “I have a ______. What do you have?” Or “This is a ______.”

• **Intermediate**—“This is a ______ because it has ______ and ______.” Or “This is a ______, not a ______.” Or whatever other familiar language pattern best suits the context.

• **Advanced**—“______ is related to ______ [tell to what and how].” Or “A characteristic [attribute] of ______ is ______.”
3. “You do it.”—As Illustrated Word Banks become part of the functional language environment, encourage students to use them as resources when using language orally or in writing independently.

Sentence Construction Charts

A sentence construction chart provides a frame for a specific language pattern in English and offers sample words or phrases that can be placed into the pattern. Students can refer to a sentence construction chart to find choices of words by parts of speech within a given pattern.

Figure 3.2 shows an example of a simple sentence construction chart with the pattern “The _____ can/cannot ______.” Sentences that may be constructed from this chart include: The dog can play outside or The dog cannot sleep inside.

By providing sentence stems and frames, teachers give students the opportunity to learn and practice new language patterns. Sentence construction charts allow students to construct grammatically correct sentences at a level of complexity beyond that which they could generate independently. Using topic vocabulary from Illustrated Word Banks, word walls, and charts, students can produce their own sentences based on the stem or frame.

Sentence stems provide the opening word(s), phrase, or clause of a sentence, leaving the rest to be completed:

“There are….” (There are books in the classroom.)
“I was surprised when….” (I was surprised when I saw her wearing a hat.)

Sentence frames leave one or more portions of the sentence blank; these can be at the beginning, middle, and/or end of a sentence:

“The _____ went ______.” (The man went home.)
“I like to _____ and _____, but not ______.” (I like to run and skip, but not swim.)
“_____ are _____-er than _____.” (Cars are faster than bicycles.)

Sentence stems and frames are appropriate for written or oral responses and may be used for all types of language functions.

To prepare a sentence construction chart, first identify the sentence stem or frame you want to work with. It is important to select useful and
meaningful sentences and to add the purpose of the sentence frame to the side, such as:

- Express action: “The _____ went _____.” (The mouse went under the house.)
- Express preferences: “I like to _____.” (I like to swim.)
- Compare: “_____ and _____ are _____er than _____.” (Moose and elk are bigger than horses.)

When possible, provide several variations of the language pattern. For example, when creating sentences that are used for comparing, you might demonstrate the following sentence variations:

“_____ and _____ are similar because they both _____.” (Cars and buses are similar because they both have engines.)
“Both _____ and _____ are/have/can _____.” (Both cars and buses have engines.)
“_____ and _____ have _____ in common.” (Cars and buses have engines in common.)

Write the sentence stems or frames using the new language pattern(s) on chart paper or on strips of plain paper to use in a pocket chart. It is help-
ful to build sentences with topic vocabulary from Illustrated Word Banks or other visual support materials. Use a different color of marker for each category of word; for example, the subject of the sentence may be written in blue, the verb, red; and so on. During the lesson, students may suggest other words to add to the list.

To teach language patterns using the sentence construction chart, consider the following procedures:

1. "I do it."—Introduce the sentence frame(s). Read the initial familiar sentence to the students, then explain the purpose of the sentence (its function). Use sample words on the list(s) to show how they can be substituted to create new sentences. Model how to generate sentences by using the stem or frame and adding well-known topic vocabulary or words from familiar sources to generate sentences. Put a sticky note by the words that you are changing.

2. "We do it."—Students repeat with you the sentences you model. Then individual students suggest sentences, placing sticky notes by their word choices. The rest of the class repeats the new sentences. Mix it up by asking and answering questions or by changing the subject of the sentence (first to third, singular to plural) or tense, as appropriate to students' level of proficiency.

3. "You do it."—Give students an opportunity to independently generate sentences using a structured format for practicing the language patterns with each other. Examples of structured formats include think, pair, share with a partner, or Talking Stick, in which students take turns in a small group (see the following description). After extensive oral practice, students can use the sentence construction chart to compose written sentences in structured small-group formats such as pass the pen for writing practice.

Sentence construction charts have the potential to be used at all levels of language development. Figure 3.3 illustrates an example of a more advanced sentence construction chart that not only represents a more complicated syntactical pattern but also provides a wonderful opportunity for enriched vocabulary development.

**Talking Stick Activity for Structured Language Practice**

This activity supports students' use of increasingly precise and varied language for interesting purposes. In order to internalize new vocabulary and develop grammatical accuracy, students need lots and lots of practice. It is important to develop automatic and fluent accuracy, so attention must be paid to correctness—not just what is said but also how it is
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An</th>
<th>enormous adjective</th>
<th>bald eagle Noun (who, what)</th>
<th>soared Verb (did what)</th>
<th>over the forest. prepositional phrase (where)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>powerful</td>
<td>soared</td>
<td>on the rock</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some</td>
<td>fast</td>
<td>dove</td>
<td>over the ocean</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven</td>
<td>majestic</td>
<td>flew</td>
<td>in the sky</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A few</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>propelled</td>
<td>around the treetops</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many</td>
<td>bold</td>
<td>devoured</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several</td>
<td>large</td>
<td>fished</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dozens</td>
<td>brown</td>
<td>tore</td>
<td></td>
<td>screamed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 3.3.** An advanced sentence construction chart.

said. Structured language practice routines ensure that each student practices new language multiple times during every lesson. Fifty percent of each Systematic ELD lesson should be dedicated to structured language practice, with the teacher monitoring accuracy and providing corrective feedback.

One example of structured language practice is an activity called *Talking Stick*. In this participation strategy, students work in small groups and take turns addressing a prompt from the teacher. This routine allows every student to have the opportunity to speak several times and encourages more reflective or reticent participants to take a turn.

To prepare for the Talking Stick activity, first gather some sentence frames or a graphic organizer that students will use to practice their language patterns. Be ready with a list of brick vocabulary that relates to your current study. Divide your class into groups of approximately four students and have enough sticks (or erasers, stuffed animals, or any other designated objects) so that there is one per group. Go over the procedures for Talking Stick with the students: Students sit in a circle. The stick is passed around clockwise at first. Students can only “pass” (decline to respond) one time.

To use the Talking Stick activity for structured language practice, consider the following procedures:

1. “I do it.”—Display the sentence construction chart, graphic organizer, or other material that you will be working from. Model an example of a word or sentence using the structure and vocabulary you want to practice. For example, with students who are practicing the language structure “I am _____” (*I am eating*), the teacher might say, “I am sitting. I am talking.”
2. "We do it."—The teacher asks a question or gives a prompt, then passes a talking stick to one student in each group. The student with the object speaks, following the pattern the teacher has presented (e.g., "I am ______"). Everyone listens, then the student passes the talking stick on to the next person. The process continues until everyone in the group has a turn speaking or until the teacher gives a signal to return the talking stick.

3. "You do it."—To extend the activity, once everyone in the group has had a turn speaking, anyone in the group may ask for another turn by saying, "Please hand me the talking stick."

The Talking Stick activity can be adapted for students from all levels of language proficiency. For example, students at the beginning levels of English proficiency may be asked to give a one-word response, such as to name a verb, an animal, or another familiar object. If desired, the other students can repeat the word each individual gives. Students at the intermediate levels may be asked to give comparative adjectives, such as big, bigger, biggest; smart, smarter, smartest; funny, funnier, funniest; or a new verb tense, such as I eat, I am eating, I was eating, I ate, I will eat. Students at the advanced levels of English proficiency can practice gaining fluency and correctness with complex language patterns and advanced vocabulary, such as in the sentence He was the president who wrote a famous speech.

CONCLUSION

For English learners to achieve at high levels in literacy tasks in their elementary school classrooms, it is crucial that they receive support in learning the structures and vocabulary of academic English. Developing this proficiency requires explicit language instruction that builds on what students can currently do and stretches them to attain ever more complex language patterns. In this chapter we have provided a foundation for understanding the importance of language in literacy and academic achievement. We outlined the challenges that English learners face in achieving academic success and discussed the need for all teachers to be adequately prepared to provide explicit language instruction for their students.

English learners enter American classrooms at a variety of proficiency levels in English and with widely varied background and schooling experiences. Key to meeting their academic needs is an understanding of the background language and literacy strengths they bring and their current levels of oral and written English. Once students' language skills are iden-
tified, teachers can structure appropriate learning opportunities through an instructional blueprint for English learners. According to this blueprint, students receive two kinds of explicit language instruction: Systematic ELD instruction and explicit language for content. This double-focused approach ensures that students (1) develop an increasingly strong foundation in the complex structures and vocabulary of the English language, (2) learn the academic language that they need to engage with the literacy content of their classroom and to express their personal understanding, and (3) comprehend the grade-level materials that are presented in class.

Throughout this chapter, we have guided readers with a focused approach to explicit language instruction. Students must always be aware of the communicative purposes of classroom tasks, or functions, so that they see how what they are learning is connected to language use in the real world. Students are explicitly taught the forms of both the vocabulary—brick and mortar words—and the syntactical patterns of English. Finally, students are provided many opportunities to try out the language that they are learning to develop fluency in the accurate use of language.

We closed the chapter by providing in-depth instructions in how to implement three tools for explicit language instruction: Illustrated Word Banks, sentence construction charts, and Talking Sticks for structured language practice. These teaching methods offer ways to provide visual support to students in their language learning, to scaffold their knowledge of increasingly complex language patterns, and to provide opportunities to get guided practice and feedback from the teacher. It is our hope that these three examples serve as stepping stones for teachers to try out more and more explicit language instruction in their own classrooms.

Literacy achievement in English is dependent on a rich language foundation that allows students to comprehend the texts they are reading and writing and to communicate their personal understandings orally and in print. This chapter has provided important tools and concepts to help teachers plan for explicit language instruction that allows students to construct meaning in their reading and writing classrooms.

REFERENCES


