Five Questions to Answer
Before Adopting ELD Materials

Susana Dutro and Raquel Núñez

According to Title III requirements, regardless of the type of program in which English learners are enrolled, they must receive instruction in English at their level of English proficiency, as well as meaningful access to grade-level academic content (Castañeda v. Pickard, 1981). School systems are compelled to structure the day to ensure English learners receive explicit language instruction for these two related, but distinct, purposes:

- **Integrated ELD** to provide meaningful access to language arts (and other content) instruction. Grade-level content learning is in the foreground; it is the purpose for instruction – and while students' language development needs must inform planning, the instructional goal is achieving the demands of grade-level content.

- **Dedicated ELD** to grow students' proficiency in English. Proficiency-level language learning is in the foreground; it is the purpose for instruction – and while grade-level literacy needs must inform planning, the instructional goal is developing English language proficiency.

As they implement Common Core State Standards (CCSS), districts are beginning to explore aligned language arts materials for possible adoption. Typically included in many English language arts programs are materials for ELD. Sometimes these materials clearly distinguish between integrated and dedicated ELD instruction; other times they do not. It is imperative that before investing district resources, those responsible for selecting instructional materials recognize essential elements of the two types of ELD instruction that English learners require:

integrated ELD instruction meant to assure access to grade-level language arts instruction, and **dedicated ELD instruction** meant to grow students' proficiency in English (Dutro & Moran, 2003; Ellis, 2008; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Goldenberg, 2008; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; CDE 2012). Recognizing the essential elements of each type of ELD can be trickier than it seems.

In our review of the ELD components within ELA programs, we generally find that integrated ELD is more thoroughly addressed than dedicated ELD. Sometimes the essential elements of dedicated ELD are absent. In this article, we raise five questions informed by research to guide districts in evaluating materials for dedicated ELD instruction.

> … all students should be held to the same high expectations outlined in the Common Core State Standards. This includes students who are English Language Learners (ELLs). However, these students may require additional time, appropriate instructional support, and aligned assessments as they acquire both English language proficiency and content area knowledge.
>
> (Application of the CCSS for English Language Learners, National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010)

1. Is there an articulated scope and sequence that builds along a continuum of English proficiency?

Look for a carefully mapped language build for each phase of English proficiency, progressing from the early through late Emerging/Beginning phase, then to the early through late Expanding/Intermediate phase, then to the advanced uses of English that bridge to full proficiency.

Language teaching and learning during dedicated ELD should be organized according to a research-based scope and sequence of language knowledge that includes foundational vocabulary and linguistic patterns and uses thinking skills mapped to grade-appropriate expectations (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; CDE 2012). Instruction should focus on language that students are not likely to learn outside of school or efficiently pick up on their own, that will not be explicitly taught in other subject areas, and that is essential for academic learning, classroom participation, and real-life communication.

Throughout the dedicated ELD program, language should intentionally build from the early phase of each proficiency level to the late, or exiting, phase of that level. For example, the language at the end of the Emerging level should lead seamlessly into the language taught at the beginning of the Expanding level. It should increase in nuance and complexity across the academic year and from one grade level to the next. This continuum should be laid out transparently, aligning to proficiency descriptions in ELD standards and expanding into and from the grade-level performance demands of the CCSS or other state standards.

2. Do the lessons actually teach – or merely use – the language described in the scope and sequence?

Let's say a program lays out a plausible scope and sequence of language learning by proficiency level. The next question is whether that language is actually being taught. There are three major pitfalls to look out for.

The first is the assumption that varying language *input* will result in equipping students for improved language *output*. An example of this is a program that relies on providing the teacher with explanations and prompts differentiated by proficiency level. This may ease student comprehension in the short run, but it does not ensure students will be able to express their understanding through speaking or writing. Language is not acquired through input alone; it requires using, exploring, thinking about, and playing around with options for speaking and writing (Ellis, 2008).

Language learning is accelerated through explanation and meaningful practice (Norris & Ortega, 2006; Ellis, 2008). The second pitfall occurs when this concept is not truly understood. Many programs confuse providing language *supports* with providing language *instruction*. Supports such as word banks, graphic organizers, writing templates, and sentence frames are insufficient without instruction in the form of modeling, discussion, and ample opportunities for student practice. A dedicated ELD program should include explicit language instruction in which students are shown how to use vocabulary and linguistic patterns to communicate their thinking, as opposed to simply hearing the language used or practicing it in ways that are rote or disconnected from meaningful communication (Ellis, 2008; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

The third pitfall is relying solely on the demands of literacy instruction to drive language instruction. Deconstructing text to illuminate how language is used is tremendously important and appropriate as part of *integrated ELD*. The danger in relying on the same text for *dedicated ELD* is that the language taught is determined by grade-level content rather than by students' assessed proficiency level and a clearly articulated scope and sequence of language knowledge (Ellis, 2008). This can result in shifting the focus away from building language at students' assessed proficiency-levels during dedicated ELD time, leaving crucial language learning unattended.

3. Are students taught language that will support them in fully participating in academics and real-life contexts?

English learners must learn the language not only to participate fully in grade-level academics, but also to effectively interact in a range of contexts in and outside of the school day. The development of socio-academic language includes both academic and conversational purposes, norms of social usage, and pragmatics: knowing

how to communicate appropriately in different situational contexts. This aspect of language is strongly informed by cultural contexts and includes tone of voice, cadence (e.g., voice rising when asking a question), register (formal or informal; academic, social, or intimate), and discourse styles (CDE, 2012; Council of Chief State Schools, 2014; WIDA, 2012).

In the Application of Common Core State Standards for English Language Learners, the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and the Council of Chief State School Officers state that in addition to learning the language needed to fully access grade-level content, English learners must be taught the socio-academic language needed to:

- Engage in a variety of language experiences.
- Participate in classroom discourse and interaction.
- Develop communicative strengths in language arts (2010)

As the California English Language Arts/English Language Development Framework states, "content plays a key role in designated ELD since it is not possible to develop advanced levels of English using texts and tasks devoid of academic content language. *However, designated ELD is not a time to teach (or reteach) content* [emphasis added]" (CDEF, 2014, Ch.2, p. 115).

In addition to preparing ELs for grade-level academic work, dedicated ELD is students' sole opportunity to learn critical language knowledge that is not embedded in or extracted from specific subject-matter work (Genesee et al., 2005; Goldenberg, 2008; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Dutro & Moran, 2003.) Developing language exclusively – or even predominantly – from English language arts texts, topics, or skills misses the opportunity to teach and practice other high-leverage language. Dedicated ELD is the one designated time in the instructional day for English learners to accelerate learning the language they need not only for academics, but also for productive classroom participation and real-life interactions.

Dedicated ELD is meant to build students' working knowledge of English so that it may serve as a bridge for expressing their thinking vis-à-vis grade-level work and social purposes. The language taught and practiced in dedicated ELD should be high leverage and portable. It must support a wide range of communicative tasks, such as asking for clarification, making comparisons, expressing cause and effect relationships, sequencing events or processes, making requests, and explaining a point of view. This means the language is useful and relevant not only in grade-level subject matter work but also beyond lesson topics and texts; for example, it supports students in building successful interpersonal interactions.

4. Do assessments focus on accuracy, complexity, and fluency of language use?

A critical aspect of any program is assessment of student learning. In dedicated ELD, the purpose is for students to learn how to use language to accurately and fluently communicate their thinking. The assessment component of a dedicated ELD program should capture data about how students are using and misusing language and how this information prepares us to adapt instruction to grow their knowledge of English at their phase of proficiency, eventually leading them to full proficiency in English.

It is not unusual to discover upon analysis that many language assessments focus on topic knowledge or comprehension of texts, as opposed to agility of language use. For example, the emphasis in many dedicated ELD program assessments is responding to reading passages. This confuses the purpose of assessment. Rather than assessing students' growing understanding of how to manipulate the English language to express their thinking, these assessments inadvertently shift the focus to assessment of reading comprehension.

An analysis of the literature on effective language assessments (Norris & Ortega, 2006) suggests the need to monitor language use through prompts that:

- Focus on vocabulary – demonstrating knowledge of topic-specific vocabulary.
- Focus on forms – composing constructed responses to apply grammatical knowledge flexibly.
- Meaning-based application – eliciting open responses for students to apply their ability to communicate for functional and relevant purposes, such as comparing and contrasting, explaining reasons, and so on.

These types of prompts provide data for analysis of various aspects of language (e.g., precise and varied word choice, syntax, grammar, sentence complexity and variation, register, etc.) and collectively build a robust picture of how students are able to use the language they are learning and have been taught.

"Test to the Teach"
In reviewing dedicated ELD programs, educators must be sure assessments "test to the teach." It is unfair to expect students to use language they have not been taught. Look to make sure assessments include oral demonstration of language use, writing tasks are preceded by abundant oral rehearsal, and each task calls for using language that enables students to express their thinking about the concept at hand. Program assessments are only as good as their capacity to let students demonstrate how well they have learned the language taught and practiced during instruction.

In addition to assuring that language use (rather than content knowledge or literacy skills) is being assessed, consider the completeness of the assessment system (CDE, 2014, Ch.8). Look for opportunities for teachers to monitor students' language progress – oral and written – on an ongoing basis throughout the course of instruction:

- Minute by minute within a lesson.
- Daily (as part of lesson closure to inform the next lesson).
- Weekly (to know how to move forward with the next week[s] of lessons).
- Unit (at the end of each instructional unit).

5. Are students provided opportunities to develop metalinguistic awareness?

In addition to being taught how to use language, students must also be taught how and why we make different choices when communicating in different contexts. Metalinguistic awareness is the ability to reflect on the use of language, and knowing how to express a single idea in various ways by playing around with word choice and manipulating sentence structure. It is making conscious decisions about how to express oneself to achieve a desired purpose – both orally and in print.

Evidencing its importance, metalinguistic awareness is referenced as an essential component of language learning in most instructional standards. Examples include: CCSS's Speaking and Listening Anchor Standard 6 (*adapt speech to a variety of contexts and communicative tasks*) and Writing Anchor Standard 4 (*produce writing that is appropriate to task, purpose, and audience*); CA ELD Standards for Knowledge of Language (*awareness about ways in which language may be different based on task, purpose, and audience*); WIDA's Socio-cultural Contexts for Language (*… involves the student's awareness of appropriate register, genre, topic, task/situation, and participants' identities and social roles*); ELP Standards (*The development of students' awareness of the socio-cultural aspects of communication in listening, speaking, reading, and writing*).

In high-quality dedicated ELD instruction, English learners think about how to manipulate the language in different ways to develop an understanding of how English works. They should be taught and challenged to explore language in compelling and playful ways.

When reviewing dedicated ELD programs, look for whether students are taught multiple ways to express similar ideas, and whether they are provided regular opportunities to experiment with language as they decide how to communicate their ideas.

Adopting Materials for Dedicated ELD Instruction

District leaders have an obligation to ensure teachers have the instructional materials they need to effectively teach dedicated ELD. It is helpful for district committees to establish a shared understanding of what it means to teach high-leverage language for socio-academic purposes across proficiency levels and what it looks like in instructional materials.

This shared understanding enables teams to take charge of the adoption process. It enables them to evaluate programs with confidence – and this is needed. Some programs offer beautiful visuals, engaging computer software, and other seemingly helpful components, yet are not grounded in a coherent approach for building English competence from one proficiency level to the next. Others misconstrue the notion of "into and through" the content by using the designated ELD block to review topics or skills taught in the English language arts component or to pre-teach or re-teach literacy learning. Some do not teach students how to manipulate language to take charge of how to communicate their thinking. Still others neglect to explicitly teach language at all.

States often provide criteria for districts to select instructional materials, and some create lists of adopted publishers whose materials are deemed to meet those criteria. Although each state's criteria must address the requirements of Title III, they do not always articulate a clear distinction between integrated and dedicated ELD.

By taking charge of the adoption process, district leaders can select materials that best meet the identified needs of their English learners, the goals of their Title III Plan, and their shared vision of accelerated proficiency-leveled language instruction.

Five Questions to Answer Before Adopting Dedicated ELD Materials

Rating scale: **0** = no evidence; **1** = little or weak evidence; **2** = some or inconsistent; **3** = sufficient and consistent

	0 1 2 3
1. Is there an articulated scope and sequence that builds English proficiency? ☐ Early to late Emerging/Beginning ☐ Early to late Expanding/Intermediate ☐ Early to late Bridging/Advancing ☐ Builds foundational vocabulary ☐ Builds linguistic patterns ☐ Links to CCSS thinking skills	**0 1 2 3**
2. Do lessons actually teach or merely use language along a scope and sequence? ☐ Language input is at proficiency level ☐ Language output is modeled ☐ Language use is explained ☐ Ample student practice ☐ Meaningful contexts ☐ Focused on communicating thinking	**0 1 2 3**
3. Does the taught language support both academics and real-life contexts? ☐ Academic discussions, reading, writing ☐ Interpersonal purposes (adult, peer) ☐ Pragmatics ☐ Variety of functions and purposes ☐ Variety of language experiences ☐ High leverage and portable	**0 1 2 3**
4. Do assessments focus on accuracy, complexity, and fluency of language use? ☐ Focus on vocabulary ☐ Focus on forms (applying grammatical knowledge flexibly) ☐ Meaning-based application ☐ Minute by minute ☐ Daily ☐ Weekly ☐ End of unit	**0 1 2 3**
5. Are students provided opportunities to develop metalinguistic awareness? ☐ Multiple ways to express similar ideas ☐ Opportunities to experiment	**0 1 2 3**

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