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# Introduction

As states across the country begin to contend with how to roll out the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) as the new benchmark for what students should know and be able to perform at each grade level, they also have to determine how to meet the needs of ELLs within a more rigorously and cognitively demanding set of expectations for all students. Currently, one out of every four students in the United States comes from an immigrant family, where most of the time children speak a language other than English (Ballantyne, Sanderman, & Levy, 2008). Similarly, whereas the general population grew by 7 percent in the decades between 1997 and 1998, and 2008 and 2009, the ELL population grew by 51 percent (Ballantyne et al., 2008). However until recently, the rapid growth in the number of ELLs has not been matched with sufficient knowledge about the best way to educate this population of students with the new grade-level academic expectations, especially within the academic mainstream.

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) suggests that all students, including ELLs, must have access to the core curriculum and meet specific academic targets (NCLB, 2002). As a result, many schools and districts are struggling with how to meet the linguistic needs of ELLs across all domains of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Reading and writing, especially, are often areas where ELLs lag in achievement. Writing, specifically, is the most cognitively and linguistically demanding of the domains, as it is the culmination of speaking, reading, listening, plus syntax, grammar, and vocabulary development. Additionally, teachers are frequently not adequately prepared to teach writing across genres and content areas.

Basic writing programs create foundational writing skills, but the need for students to argue and explain using multiple sources and points of view is also expected within the CCSS; writing instruction needs to extend to those demands. For example, the genre of argumentative writing is a key focus area in the CCSS. All students are expected to *interpret*, *argue*, and *analyze*, before being able to address the genre of argumentative writing. Scaffolding these cognitive skills for ELLs is essential for them to

access the academic demands of content area instruction. Linquanti and Hakuta (2012) agree that language and content must no longer be taught in isolation:

the overlap between language and content has dramatically increased, particularly as a result of the focus on higher-order language uses in the new standards. In addition, the [Understanding Language] Initiative argues that this overlap brings with it an urgent need to attend to the particulars of instructional discourse in the disciplines. (p. 8)

Since the overlap between language and content increased, correspondingly, so does the need for preparation to prepare ELLs for the demands associated with writing across disciplines.

*From Spoken to Written Language* begins by presenting the research on the linkage between academic oral language and writing development, as well as how strategically using speaking to scaffold writing assists with closing the achievement gap between ELLs and their native English peers. The book specifically focuses on the literature regarding the need to create more oral language for ELLs in a mainstream classroom setting—with an emphasis on ELLs at higher levels of language proficiency (intermediate to advanced)—which can directly scaffold the writing tasks that are explicitly taught across the content areas. The book then unpacks a framework for teaching three specific genres of writing—argumentative, procedural, and narrative writing—along with a lesson plan guide and sample lessons. The text’s language is user-friendly for classroom teachers, yet contains enough research to employ as a textbook in the university classroom or for professional development. Direct connections to the CCSS are also highlighted throughout the book.

The book is also applicable to classroom practice, as well as district and school reform efforts, with specific focus on ELLs in the mainstream classroom at the intermediate to advanced level. Teachers discover focused and detailed strategies and frameworks for altering instructional practice around using best scaffolding practices for ELLs incrementally; and administrators uncover how to increase academic achievement as schools implement these writing processes schoolwide. This book presents a user-friendly and accessible approach to teaching writing to ELLs within the CCSS. Whereas the rigor and expectations for this group of students have increased within this new reform movement, not much has been written regarding how pedagogy and practices should change in order to meet these expectations. *From Spoken to Written Language* explicitly calls out the scaffolds necessary to prepare ELLs for college and career expectations.

In my last book, *ELL Shadowing as a Catalyst for Change* (Soto, 2012), I presented the need for creating room for academic oral language development in classrooms. Specifically, that ELLs are oftentimes invisible and silent in school, and that in order to meet English language proficiency standards and provide access to the core curriculum, students need to be *required* to speak more than the two percent of a school day which is oftentimes expected of them (August, 2003). In this book, I extend the notion of how to directly use academic oral language development as a scaffold for the demands and rigor of writing. I developed detailed frameworks and lesson plans guides, based on the work of Pauline Gibbons's genre approach to teaching writing. Additionally, academic oral language development is embedded in writing lessons through the strategic teaching and use of Think-Pair-Share learning technique. In this book, I also directly show teachers how to use Think-Pair-Share to scaffold and extend into academic writing. Similarly, there is a focus on building background knowledge experiences, frequently using productive group work including Reciprocal Teaching, and participating in Socratic Seminar so that students have enough content knowledge for a written topic. Lastly, I incorporate the Frayer model to strategically teach vocabulary development so that students have a verbose vocabulary set with which to write.

The book is organized around two sections: (1) the role of academic oral language development as a scaffold for writing. The two chapters in this section introduce the research linkage between speaking and writing, as well as present the writing demands of the CCSS and how to scaffold them for ELLs; (2) the second section focuses on moving from speaking to writing across different genres—argumentation, procedural, and narration. Each of the chapters includes a sample lesson plan and graphic organizer template to use with your students. Please note that the lesson plans can be adapted for a variety of grade levels, but are targeted to a particular level (elementary, middle, or high school), to be inclusive of all grade levels holistically. The intent of the lesson plans is not necessarily that they are replicated as written (although they certainly can be), but rather that educators are given a model for how the strategies are used together, in order to scaffold the academic language demands of the CCSS. I highly encourage teachers to adapt and create their own lessons, using the strategies and resources included, as well as their own instructional materials.

The organization of the book is as follows:

- *At the beginning of each chapter*, the literature concerning meeting the instructional needs of ELLs, focusing in on the two domains of speaking and writing, and unpacking the writing demands of the CCSS is presented. Additionally, the research on the role and linkage

between academic oral language development and writing across genres is described, along with practical strategies—Think-Pair-Share, Frayer model, and Socratic Seminar—to scaffold listening and speaking.

- *In the middle of the book* three different genres of writing—argumentation, procedural, and narration—are unpacked with a framework for taking students from speaking to writing, building background knowledge, and developing vocabulary so that students are adequately prepared for each writing approach. As each of the three genres of writing are unpacked, they are connected to the demands of the CCSS, and sample lessons are presented that are aligned to the common core.
- *At the end of the book*, a thorough index and lesson plan templates incorporating the CCSS are included.
- *Chapter Resources include:*
  - Lesson plan templates for the three genres of writing addressed in the CCSS; and
  - Academic language development strategy graphic organizers.