

SCAFFOLDING LANGUAGE SCAFFOLDING LEARNING

Teaching Second Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

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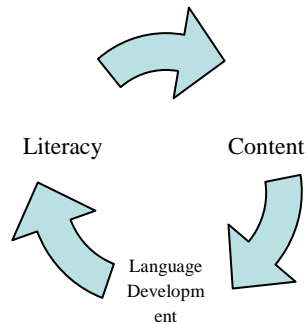
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Topic/Purpose of the Book:

This book suggests how to teach linguistically diverse students in a mainstream classroom using current pedagogy in the four domains of literacy and by integrating English in other subject areas of the curriculum.



I chose to read this book because working in a highly ESL populated school I wanted to enrich my literacy program to address the needs of my students. **Initially, I had chosen another book to read by the same author but when I went to my Principal for her expert advice she mentioned this book.** Also, the foreword is by Jim Cummins whose work really inspired me.

What do I like best about the book?

It's an easy and practical resource with strategies and activities that any teacher could do in her classroom. The book has a balance between theory and practice and it is applicable for all elementary grades. Gibbons mentions the theories briefly but gives examples that make it easier to understand and offers instructional practices.

Language acquisition is not a linear process. Gibbons recognizes the struggle of learners and the challenges that teachers face to cater to their needs. In this book, she suggests how to integrate English teaching through literacy and other parts of the curriculum. Students need a range of strategies and skills to fully develop their second language. Gibbons asserts that language development occurs as a result of interactions with others and in social context where learning takes place.

The book is divided into seven chapters:

(1) "Scaffolding Language and Learning"

- (2) "Classroom Talk: Creating Contexts for Language Learning"
- (3) "From Speaking to Writing in the Content Classroom"
- (4) "Writing in a Second Language across the Curriculum: An Integrated Approach"
- (5) "Reading in a Second Language"
- (6) "Listening: An Active and Thinking Process"
- (7) "Learning Language, Learning through Language, and Learning about Language: Developing an Integrated Curriculum."

A glossary of teaching activities is included at the end of the book.

It covers the four domains of language or literacy: **reading, writing, listening, speaking** and extends by integrating English in other content areas. It reiterates the importance of "Classroom Talk" which provides the opportunity or need for students to produce comprehensible output. I found this interesting especially for ELL's if the teacher does two thirds of the talking or questioning, it deprives students of the interactional features to enable development of second language.

There is a great emphasis on Group work- students feel at ease working with their peers than in front of the whole class. But the talk has to have a purpose and it should be required as part of group work and not just encouraged. The wording is gradually refined to more explicit and written like language. Some examples for group work are:

Picture sequencing

Questionnaires

Problem solving

Hot seat

How the information will change or support my classroom practices

"Meaning does not reside solely in the words and structures of the text, but is constructed in the course of a transaction between the text and the reader." p.80

Successful readers take on four roles as they read:

- ✓ **Reader as code breaker**
- ✓ **Reader as a text participant**
- ✓ **Reader as text user**
- ✓ **Reader as text analyst**

Gibbons discusses their implications for ESL learners but highlights that teachers should build up the knowledge and understandings that relate to the text, so readers could interact with the text and it's not unfamiliar for them – before reading activities are significant

They should not only help readers understand the text that they are reading and but also help readers develop good reading strategies for reading other texts.

Before, during and after reading activities

Listening – active and thinking process about meaning is similar to reading both involve comprehension- the active construction of meaning builder

Any critique I may have of the information or practices in the book/ what I liked least in the book:

A key quote from the book that resounded with me:

*“ESL readers need access to a linguistically and culturally **rich reading environment**, a range of **reading strategies** to bring to the process of reading, and a **literacy program** that aims to develop all the **roles that effective readers take on.**” (p.84)*

This quote really stood out to me because it re affirmed my belief that ESL students need to be exposed to a rich environment and be taught various reading strategies that will support their reading adventure which is totally new to them. Also, as teachers we need to explicitly teach them the reading strategies by modelling to them and then scaffolding for them till they are independently able to use them. This reminds me of the book talk by our group member Kristi on improving comprehension through think alouds. Reading is meaning making so the more support we can provide our English language learners in our classrooms, the second language development will be faster. It helped me to support my ELL’s in moving beyond initial use of English to using it in other subject areas. I realized the significant role teachers play in scaffolding language and learning for their ESL students whereby reflecting in this teaching learning process. As in one we learned about how a teachers own pedagogy or beliefs play a role

Another person in your school or the class group whom you believe would enjoy the book:

I think all teachers who teach in classrooms or schools with English language learners in their classrooms should read this book to inform their practice and plan accordingly for the students’ success. I have already recommended it to my Grade partners at my school.

If you are teaching Junior or Intermediate it will be a good book to consider reading.

English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking

Written By: Pauline Gibbons

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