Programs for Teaching English Language Learners[1]

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Today's K-12 American classrooms are rich with students from families of diverse cultural, socioeconomic, and linguistic backgrounds. An increasingly important dimension of diversity in contemporary schools is language and, in particular, the relative proficiency students have in English and other languages when they enter school, whether at the primary, elementary, or secondary level. Language is the key to academic success because it provides access to the curriculum. In schools within the United States, that key is English. In this essay, we discuss programs and approaches for educating students who come to school with limited proficiency in English.

Addressing the Needs of English-Language Learners

Educators and policy makers use various terms to describe students with limited English proficiency. In this essay, we refer to these students as English-language learners. State and federal regulations generally use the term limited-English-proficient (LEP) students. Regardless of differences in the terms used to describe them, however, all English-language learners face the same dual challenges: mastering English, and acquiring the academic skills and knowledge in disciplines such as science that are essential for a sound education and future career paths. Because these students may begin their schooling in the United States at any grade and at any time during the academic year, educators at all levels must be prepared with appropriate programs and approaches to meet these students' varied needs. Quality programs for such students aim for the same content and academic standards set by state and district authorities for native-English-

[1] In A. Rosebery & B. Warren (Eds) (2007). Teaching Science to English Language Learners, pp. 131-147. Washington, D.C.: National Science Foundation.

speaking students. At the same time, they also aim for high levels of English-language proficiency, within a realistic time frame.

In the sections that follow, we discuss the most common educational approaches that are available for meeting the diverse and complex needs of English-language learners (see Genesee, 1999, for a detailed description of some of these options). All programs serving English-language learners should aim for high standards, both in academic disciplines and in English-language proficiency, but different paths can be taken, particularly with respect to use and maintenance of the students' first languages. We distinguish between:

- programs for English-language learners that aim to transition them from their first language to all-English instruction as quickly as possible—for example, mainstream programs with English-as-a-second-language instruction; transitional bilingual education; and newcomer programs, and
- programs that aim to maintain and further develop students' first language while promoting their acquisition of English—for example, developmental bilingual and two-way bilingual immersion programs. In these cases, the development of bilingualism and bi-literacy are key goals.

We also discuss a general instructional approach—sheltered instruction—that is applicable to all students learning through the medium of English as a second language, regardless of their background or the type of program they are in.

Approaches That Focus on English Proficiency

English-as-a-Second-Language Instruction

A common approach to educating English-language learners, indeed probably the most prevalent, is English-as-a-second-language instruction (ESL) by specially-trained ESL teachers while students receive core academic instruction in mainstream classes conducted in English. Programs with ESL instruction for students who are otherwise mainstreamed or immersed in English focus only on monolingual proficiency in English. ESL instruction is often organized around groups of students who are "pulled out" of mainstream classes, according to their English-proficiency level, typically

for 30 minutes to an hour per day. "Pull-out" ESL instruction of this sort provides direct language instruction that is intended to promote the students' English-language development. Instruction tends to be highly individualized in accordance with each student's level of proficiency in oral English language and literacy (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, 1997).

Depending on the particular teacher, there is more or less integration of ESL instruction with the academic objectives of the mainstream curriculum. The students' mainstream classroom teachers, with whom they spend most of their time, may or may not adapt their instruction to meet the students' language levels, and this can affect what students learning English learn. The most effective ESL instruction is planned with an eye to facilitating the students' comprehension and mastery of the academic instruction that comprises the majority of their school day. This can best be achieved if the classroom teachers are also certified in ESL, as the case study below illustrates.

Case study: Spring Branch, Texas. Spring Branch, Texas, Independent School District (SBISD) is an example of this approach. SBISD is located just outside the city of Houston. Approximately 29% of the district's 33,000 students are English-language learners. Spanish is the first language of most of these students. Because many of SBISD's classroom teachers are certified in ESL, language development is integrated with ongoing academic work. When teachers are bilingual, they use Spanish to support their students' conceptual development as well as their acquisition of English.

A few years ago, the district undertook the challenge of providing hands-on, inquiry-oriented science instruction to all its students. All faculty members, including ESL classroom teachers, participated in an ambitious program of professional development that included coaching, individual mentoring, and instruction in district-mandated units. One result was that many ESL classroom teachers now view science as a central site for developing their students' English-language skills.

Gloria Stewart, a first-grade ESL classroom teacher in SBISD, leverages reading, writing, and talking in science as occasions for language development. When her students pose questions,

observe natural phenomena, record observations, and develop conclusions, they are gaining valuable language in both English and Spanish.

Colleen Dominguez teaches fourth grade. She feels that the key to integrating language development and science lies in organizing her students in small groups. All the children, including the quiet ones, have a chance to try out their ideas, think through their confusions, and practice their thoughts out loud before sharing them with the class. Ms. Dominguez finds that because of their work in small groups, her students not only eagerly take the floor during science discussions but also present their ideas with increased confidence (even when they are wrong!).

Amelia Leballo teaches fifth grade in SBISD. She is constantly on the lookout for ways to engage her students in authentic communication during science. As part of an investigation into the habitat, life cycle, and behavior of the brassica butterfly, for example, she set up meetings between her students and student "scientists" in other classes who were studying butterflies. These meetings took place outside in the school's butterfly garden, where the children paired up to ask and answer questions about butterflies, and to review what they knew and what they would like to know about butterflies.

The teachers in these classrooms incorporate regular and varied opportunities for the students to share what they are thinking in science in both written and oral language. As a result, the students engage with and learn a wide range of syntactic forms (e.g., questions, statements, explanations, voices, tenses) and vocabulary (e.g., growth vs. development, metamorphosis), expanding their English-language skills at the same time that they articulate scientific understandings.

Not all districts employ ESL teachers as classroom teachers, as is the case in SBISD. In some cases, ESL teachers work alongside classroom teachers to provide ESL instruction that is continuously fine-tuned to students' language needs; this is sometimes referred to as "push-in" ESL. This approach is designed to integrate ESL instruction with the academic language needs of English-language learners. To accomplish this goal**,** ESL teachers assist classroom teachers in adapting their instructional strategies to make academic instruction comprehensible to English-language learners, and to promote their English-language development. Without efforts such as

this, English-language learners risk being overlooked or under-served during extended portions of the school day by teachers who may be unfamiliar with ESL strategies. Sheltered instruction, to be discussed later, is one approach that can help make academic instruction in English comprehensible to English-language learners (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000).

Transitional Bilingual Education

Like mainstream education with ESL instruction, transitional bilingual education (TBE)—despite its name—aims for proficiency in English only, along with high levels of academic development. Proficiency in a student's first language is *not* a goal of TBE. The typical TBE program provides initial instruction in literacy in the students' first language so that students can begin to acquire literacy skills in a language they already know. Content instruction is also offered in the students' first language in subjects such as science that might suffer if instruction were to take place in English before students were proficient in it. TBE incorporates instruction in English as a second language to promote oral English language development at the same time that students are learning academic content in their first language. Students also participate in non-academic subjects, such as art, music, and physical education classes that are taught in English.

As students acquire proficiency in spoken English, the language of academic instruction gradually shifts from the students' first language to English. Content instruction in English is often provided in specially-designed, individualized programs, sometimes using sheltered-instruction strategies, which are discussed later in this essay. The transition to English instruction typically starts with math computations, followed by reading and writing, then science, and finally social studies. The actual sequencing of content areas may vary, however, due to many factors, one of which is the extent to which content area teachers are willing and prepared to work with English-language learners. Once students acquire sufficient English proficiency, they "transition" to classes in which all instruction is in English. Thus, TBE uses the students' first language to work toward grade-level mastery of academic content only until students can make a full transition to all-English instruction.

Most TBE programs start in kindergarten or first grade, when the largest number of English-language learners begins schooling in the United States. These programs typically aim for students

to achieve basic proficiency in oral English within two years and to move to an all-English program within three years. TBE programs are sometimes referred to as "early-exit bilingual education" programs because students "exit" the native language portion of the program relatively early in comparison to other forms of bilingual education (e.g., developmental bilingual education) that maintain first-language instruction throughout the elementary grades. Research showing that it can take between a minimum of four years and a maximum of eight for English-language learners to score at the average level on district or standardized English-language tests calls into question the wisdom of such a short transition phase (Collier, 1987). After only three years, students may not have the English-language skills they need in order to prosper academically in mainstream classrooms, and ongoing support after exit from such TBE programs can be crucial to the students' academic success.

Case study: Cambridge, Massachusetts. One example of a mainstream classroom into which English-language learners have been transitioned from a TBE program is found in the opening vignette of Chapter 8 by Warren & Rosebery, this volume. This vignette depicts a "science talk" in teacher Mary DiSchino's third- and fourth-grade classroom in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The Cambridge Public Schools' Haitian Creole Bilingual Program, which is a TBE program, is located in Ms. DiSchino's school. (In Fall, 2002, Massachusetts passed legislation requiring that instruction for all students be provided only in English, except under certain specified circumstances.) After three years of bilingual and ESL education in this program, students are typically moved into a classroom like Ms. DiSchino's, in which English is the sole language of instruction. The number of English-language learners in Ms. DiSchino's classroom varies from one year to the next. In the class depicted in the vignette in this essay 32% of Ms. DiSchino's students were English-language learners.

Regardless of the fact that they are not proficient in English when they are transitioned into her classroom, Ms. DiSchino's English-language learners receive instruction in all subjects, including science, in English. Ms. DiSchino's style of teaching science, as described in the Warren & Rosebery essay, provides a number of supports for these children. One of her weekly practices is to "go around the circle" and ask each student to explain what he or she is thinking about the scientific question the class is investigating. The point of this is to give students a chance to put

their scientific ideas and experiences into their own words and to let the other students hear and consider these thoughts. Sometimes Ms. DiSchino will ask a student to “say more about what you mean” if the student uses a word Ms. DiSchino thinks other students may not know or refers to experiences or knowledge she thinks they may not share. Because Ms. DiSchino makes it clear that the quality of one’s thinking and ideas matters more than one’s fluency in English in these conversations, every student can make an important contribution to the class’s collective thinking. In addition to using particular pedagogical practices in science, Ms. DiSchino provides additional forms of support for her English-language learners—ranging from providing them with regular opportunities to connect their real-life experiences to the science they are learning, to providing one-on-one support when possible, to encouraging them to seek clarification of instructions, activities, etc. as necessary. In this way, Ms. DiSchino helps her English-language learners learn important ideas and practices in science.

Newcomer Programs

Newcomer programs are intended to serve the needs of middle- and high-school-age immigrant students with low levels of English-language proficiency and/or low levels of literacy in their first language due to limited formal schooling in their home countries (see Short & Boyson, in press, for a more detailed description). Most newcomer programs have two major goals:

1. to help students learn basic English-language and academic skills, and
2. to facilitate students’ socio-cultural transition into the American education system.

Although definitions of "newcomers" may vary from one school system to the next, many are similar to a definition that is linked to federal funding, in which “newcomers” are defined as students who have been in the United States for three years or less and have limited English proficiency (LEP). Some programs expand this definition of newcomer to include students who are below grade level or who have had limited formal education.

Newcomer programs may be housed in mainstream schools that the newcomers will later attend, or located in centers where students from a number of different schools come together. When the newcomer program is a strand within a school, newcomer students may participate with

mainstream students in some regular school activities, such as physical education and art. When students exit these newcomer programs, they remain at the same school and continue their studies in mainstream academic program**s**. In newcomer centers, exiting students transfer to new home schools in the district. Some district intake centers, where newly arriving English-language learners are assessed for placement, offer special short-term courses for newcomers before these students are enrolled in a mainstream home school in the district.

Curricula and program designs for newcomers vary widely. Some newcomer programs serve students for the full school day and teach some academic subjects in students' first language along with English. Other programs enroll students for part of the day and offer other programs to English-language learners for the remainder of the day. These schools typically provide courses intended to facilitate the students' social and cultural integration into American society and to familiarize newcomer students with school routines, the local community, and American culture through supplementary activities such as field trips and special events. There is often a focus on literacy instruction because many newcomer students have not yet learned to read or write and special strategies are needed to teach literacy to adolescent students. Newcomer programs also may offer bilingual instruction, depending on the homogeneity of the population, the availability of resources (including teachers) in the first languages of the students, and local policies.

Case study: Boston, Massachusetts. One example of a newcomer class is found in the second vignette of Chapter 8 by Warren & Rosebery, this volume. This vignette depicts Ms. Renote Jean-François's newcomer literacy class in Boston, Massachusetts. Ms. Jean-François's students are of middle-school age and are recent immigrants from Haiti. They are learning to read and write Haitian Creole and to speak, read, and write English. Most have had interrupted schooling, and few have been taught in a way that promotes independent and creative thought; some have never attended school before.

Ms. Jean-François is responsible for teaching all academic subjects, including science. She has numerous goals for her students, including: learning basic literacy, mathematics, science, and computer skills; learning how to be successful in school; and developing leadership abilities. She is also concerned with supporting her students' socio-emotional development. Because many of

her students have limited formal education and, therefore, may not see themselves as academically competent, she is particularly interested in helping them become more confident learners.

She targets these goals through cross-disciplinary units of study, many of which have a science focus and require her students to read, write, think, research, argue points of view, use mathematics, and the like. Her students use both Haitian Creole and English, sometimes combining these languages to express their ideas in ways that are at once inventive and scientific. Many of Ms. Jean- François's students have well-developed skills in argumentation, a practice that serves them well in science. (See Hudicourt-Barnes & Ballenger, this volume, for a discussion of a discourse practice known to many Haitian students that can be used as the basis for developing argumentation skills in science.) Ms. Jean-François's students typically spend two years in her classroom, graduating from her newcomer class to the school's transitional bilingual education (TBE) program or to a program for English-language learners in one of Boston's high schools.

Approaches That Aim for Bilingual Proficiency

Developmental Bilingual Programs

Developmental bilingual education (DBE) programs provide long-term support in the students' first language (see Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000, for more details). The goal of these programs is to support English-language learners in maintaining proficiency in their first language while they acquire full proficiency in English and grade-appropriate achievement in academic domains. Most students begin DBE programs in kindergarten or first grade and continue through elementary school. Some districts offer options at secondary levels that continue the development of the first language, providing instruction in specific courses in that language.

In DBE, regular academic subjects, including language arts, are taught in both English and the students' first language for as many grades as the school district can support. DBE may resemble transitional bilingual education (TBE) in the first few years insofar as initial instruction is primarily in the first language and, as the students' proficiency in English increases, the use of English as a medium of instruction increases. In contrast to TBE, a full transition to English-only instruction is

not the objective of DBE. Content instruction in the students' first language remains part of the program for as long as possible.

DBE takes an enriched or additive approach to educating English-language learners; it promotes full proficiency in both the students' first language and in English. Development of the students' first language is viewed as desirable in its own right—for personal, social, and economic reasons—and not simply as a bridge to English-only instruction. Because TBE replaces the students' first language with English, it is "subtractive" from a linguistic perspective and can place students at risk if it does not use the students' first language to lay a solid foundation for English-language and academic development. Unlike developmental bilingual programs, TBE programs fail to capitalize on the additive bilingual effects and cognitive advantages that can result from advanced levels of bilingualism. (See Bialystok, this volume, for more on advantages of bilingualism.)

Case study: Chicago, Illinois. One example of a school in the process of implementing a developmental bilingual education program is The John Greenleaf Whittier School in Chicago, Illinois. Located in a Mexican immigrant neighborhood, the school serves a population in which approximately 98% of the students speak Spanish as their first language. The school's curriculum focuses on teaching the students to speak, read, and write in both Spanish and English. The goal is bi-literacy.

The Whittier's transition to a DBE school began in the school's Early Childhood Program, and the school continues to evolve with the addition of a new grade each year. Students in lower grades receive more instruction in Spanish than students in upper grades. For example, the ratio of Spanish instruction to English instruction in pre-school, kindergarten, and first grade is 90:10. It will be 60:40 in third grade, and 30:70 in sixth grade.

The school's science program is being developed collaboratively by the school's lead science teacher, Claudia Greene, and classroom teachers. In the early grades, science is taught in Spanish. The focus is on inquiry-oriented learning and this approach draws heavily on students' experiences in the natural world. (This approach is an example of what Garcia & Lee, this volume, term a "culturally responsive learning community.") As the DBE transition continues, it will eventually

include older students, and science will be taught in both Spanish and English. Major concepts will be taught in Spanish and the science curriculum will be used to promote academic English.

Kim Alamar, who teaches sixth grade at Whittier, holds regular science discussions with her students. She uses these discussions as a forum for students to construct and critique their ideas and theories about scientific phenomena, such as why the length of the day changes and why the moon has phases. In these discussions, she helps her students integrate and make sense of their reading, their first-hand knowledge of scientific phenomena, and the data they have collected for their science projects. Ms. Alamar encourages her students to hold their discussions in English but allows them to use Spanish to express an idea that they cannot express fully in English. She feels that this approach enables the students to examine deep and complex ideas in science at the same time that they are learning academic English.

Two-Way Immersion

Two-way immersion (TWI) programs are becoming an increasingly attractive option for schools and districts that are looking for ways to develop bilingualism in all of their students, native speakers of English as well as English-language learners. TWI programs accomplish this goal by providing integrated-language and academic instruction for native-English speakers and for native speakers of another language (who are English-language learners) using both English and the other language. Students from both language groups spend most of the school day together in the same classroom with the same teacher; therefore, the program offers a good opportunity for cultural integration as well as language learning (see Cloud, Genesee, & Hamayan, 2000, and Howard & Christian, 2002, for more details).

The primary goals of TWI programs are:

- high academic achievement,
- full proficiency in first and second languages, and
- cross-cultural understanding.

For TWI programs to succeed, however, certain conditions must be met. Schools must have available:

- adequate populations of both native-English speakers and English-language learners who share a common first language, in order to bring together balanced numbers of students in each classroom and to withstand later attrition;
- populations that express an interest in bilingualism, so they are willing to make the necessary commitment to the program; and,
- teachers who are fluent in academic uses of both languages.

As students and teachers interact socially and work together to perform academic tasks using both English and the other language, all students' abilities in both languages develop and these students acquire grade-appropriate knowledge and skills in academic subject matter. Most TWI programs start in kindergarten or first grade and continue until the end of elementary school. Some districts offer follow-on programs at the secondary level.

While there is considerable variation with regard to certain TWI program features, there are also some important core similarities among TWI programs:

- Programs usually consist of 50% native-English speakers and 50% English-language learners who share a first language other than English. Spanish is the most common additional language, but TWI programs also operate with Chinese, French, Korean, and Navajo as additional languages.

- Academic instruction takes place in both languages, with the non-English language being used at least 50% of the time. In this way, all students have the opportunity to be both first-language-speaker models and second-language learners.

- Programs create an additive bilingual environment for all students because the first languages of both groups of students are developed at the same time as their second languages.

Case study: Cambridge, Massachusetts. One example of a two-way, English-Spanish immersion program is the Amigos School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. **(**The vignettes in essays by Hudicourt-Barnes & Ballenger and Ogonowski, this volume, depict classrooms at the Amigos

School.) In 1999, Ms. Marcia Pertuz and Mrs. Ramona DeLeòn co-taught two third-grade classrooms. Ms. Pertuz, whose first language is English, taught one class of students in English for a week, while Mrs. DeLeón, whose first language is Spanish, taught the same academic content to the other class of students in Spanish. At the end of the week, the students switched teachers, and instruction was picked up and continued the following week in the alternate language.

Science, like all academic subjects at the Amigos School, is taught in this way. This approach requires significant coordination among teaching partners. For example, in order to continue with their investigation into plant growth as described in these essays, Ms. Pertuz and Mrs. DeLeòn met to find out what the students had been doing and learning in one another's class during the week, and to review the students' work. Their meeting included specific discussion about their students' thinking in regard to whether plants grow everyday and how the sun helps plants. Together, Mrs. DeLeòn and Ms. Pertuz routinely meet and work out a draft plan for science, and all subjects, for the following week—based on the children's work and the curriculum they are using. To be successful, TWI programs must encourage and support high levels of collaboration and communication between partner teachers.

Sheltered Instruction

Sheltered instruction (SI) facilitates mastery of academic content that is taught to English-language learners in English at the same time that it promotes students' development in English itself (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000). As a result, this approach is strongly recommended whenever and wherever English-language learners receive academic instruction in English. In SI, teachers teach the core curriculum in English, but modify it to meet the language development needs of English-language learners. Specific strategies are used to teach particular content areas so that the material is comprehensible to the students while at the same time promoting their English-language development. While SI shares many features of high-quality instruction for native-English speakers, it is characterized by careful attention to English-language learners' distinctive second-language-development needs and potential educational gaps.

Sheltered instruction strategies include:

- speaking at a rate and level of complexity appropriate to the proficiency level of the students;
- using visual aids, graphic organizers, and manipulatives;
- building on students' prior knowledge;
- providing frequent opportunities for students to interact;
- modeling academic tasks; and
- reviewing key-content concepts and vocabulary, among other essential features.

Using such techniques can help the teacher convey the same academic material that is expected of all students at a given grade level in a way that allows English-language learners to understand the material and to participate fully in instructional activities.

Furthermore, because it is important to facilitate language development for English-language learners, every lesson should have objectives for both language and content learning. In this way, it is possible to have every lesson do "double duty," helping students meet educational benchmarks for both language and literacy and content-area development. For example, in a science unit about simple machines, a teacher might ask students to invent their own machine and write about its attributes, giving them practice in using new technical vocabulary and in writing with academic language. When language objectives are an explicit component of content lessons, it is more likely that they will be incorporated into a lesson's activities and considered seriously by teachers and students alike.

The strategies and techniques associated with SI can be used to tailor any situation in which students must learn content in a language in which they are not fully proficient. It can be used to great advantage to teach the English component of transitional bilingual education (TBE), developmental bilingual education (DBE), and two-way immersion (TWI) programs. And in English-as-a-second-language (ESL) programs, SI can be used to teach content-area subject matter effectively.

Case study: Tucson, Arizona. The Tucson, Arizona, Unified School District (TUSD) uses SI with English-language learners in ESL and bilingual education programs. Approximately 29% of

TUSD's 61,000 students are English-language learners. While most of the district's English-language learners speak Spanish at home, the students in TUSD speak over 45 different languages. In order to improve the way inquiry science is taught, the science resource staff has sought opportunities to work with bilingual resource staff to leverage the compatibility they see between the district's hands-on science materials and inquiry-based teaching, and the strategies of SI.

Elsa Schaub teaches seventh graders in a Spanish-English Bilingual Program at the Pistor Middle School. Ms. Schaub uses a variety of SI strategies with her English-language learners. Her students typically work in small groups of two to four to conduct lab experiments, with the students assigned to groups that contain a range of English proficiency. Ms. Schaub encourages them to discuss their findings with one another and to use these discussions as the basis for their lab reports. Together, Ms. Schaub and her students create visual organizers, such as word charts, concept maps, and charts of their questions, all of which are displayed prominently in the classroom.

These organizers are key components in making Ms. Schaub's curriculum meaningful and comprehensible to all her students. Word charts give the students quick access to new vocabulary as well as to the key ideas in a unit of study. The questions chart is used in classroom discussions. Ms. Schaub's students use all of these resources to outline their science essays. Ms. Schaub feels that the question charts and concept maps in particular are important because they help her students link their prior knowledge to what is being taught in class, and allow them to share what they already know about a topic with others in the form of essays, discussions, and presentations.

While SI is often implemented in conjunction with the other program alternatives discussed here, it can also be implemented as the sole approach for educating English-language learners. In this case, it can be considered a program alternative with its own characteristics. In such cases, English-language learners receive instruction in academic subjects for all or part of the day by specially-trained SI teachers. They may also be offered additional ESL instruction, or an SI teacher may assist students developing English-language skills. Factors such as numbers of English-language learners and numbers of qualified teachers, along with other resource issues, usually determine which SI model a school system may choose to implement.

Making Choices

At the beginning of this essay, we observed that all programs for English-language learners should aim for high standards in both academic content and English-language development at the same time. When choosing among programmatic approaches and instructional alternatives, educators must decide whether they want to promote bilingual proficiency as well as students' academic development. Developmental bilingual and two-way immersion programs are appropriate choices when bilingual proficiency is a goal. Newcomer programs that use the students' first language are appropriate when students have limited prior formal schooling, provided that plans are made to place them in programs designed for English-language learners once they leave the newcomer program.

If bilingual proficiency is adopted as a goal, then the population to be served must be considered in choosing a programmatic approach (see Christian & Genesee, 2001, for detailed studies of other bilingual programs that promote bilingualism). A developmental bilingual program or newcomer program (with follow-up) are appropriate for English-language learners only; two-way immersion programs are appropriate if there is a sizable community of English-speaking students who wish to learn a second language and a sizable community of English-language learners who speak this language as their first language.

If the decision is made to adopt a program that promotes proficiency in English only, several alternatives are possible: a transitional bilingual education program, a newcomer program that does not use the students' first language, and mainstream education with ESL or sheltered instruction. Newcomer programs are most appropriate for students whose educational needs exceed the resources that the district has in its other programs. These special needs are usually a result of minimal literacy and limited prior schooling, two factors that can limit the extent to which students will benefit from other program types. Since most newcomer programs provide short, intensive programs, follow-up programs must also be in place to meet the long-term educational needs and aspirations of newcomer students.

Students typically participate in transitional bilingual programs for two or three years. However, English-language learners often need more time (up to eight years) to attain the level of language

proficiency needed for success in school. Follow-up transitional services, along with the use of SI, greatly enhance continued success for English-language learners.

In schools or districts where bilingual instruction is not offered, ESL classes provide English-language instruction and, in some cases, support content-area learning. The duration of ESL services varies widely from student to student, depending on an individual student's proficiency in English at the time of entry into the program and his or her rate of progress. An ESL program may include a sheltered instruction component for teaching the core curriculum. SI can also provide a bridge to mainstream classes as English-language learners move out of the ESL program.

As already noted, SI can be of great benefit to students enrolled in any of these program alternatives. It is appropriate for content instruction in newcomer programs and during those phases of transitional or developmental bilingual education when English is used as the medium of academic instruction. SI is particularly appropriate when academic instruction in English is initially implemented—that is, when English-language learners are most in need of modified input to ensure comprehension of academic material. If implemented effectively, SI can ensure that English-language learners comprehend academic instruction when it is delivered in English. Clearly, this is an important issue no matter which type of program is adopted.

While these program alternatives have been discussed as separate options, school districts often implement more than one in order to better meet the diverse needs of their student population. For example, a district with large numbers of new arrivals as well as a substantial population of English-language learners who began schooling in this country might choose to offer both newcomer and developmental bilingual programs. Large schools may likewise offer more than one alternative in the same building.

Conclusion

Despite their differences, the programmatic and instructional approaches discussed in this essay must share certain features in order to provide quality education for English-language learners:

- high standards with respect to both content learning and language acquisition;
- strong and knowledgeable leadership among classroom, school, and district personnel;

- extensive and ongoing parental involvement;
- developmentally-appropriate curriculum and instructional materials and aids;
- ongoing, appropriate, and state-of-the-art professional development for teachers to enable them to:
    - integrate language and academic instruction at the same time;
    - promote proficiency in English (and students' first language, where applicable) for academic purposes, including literacy;
    - ensure that academic instruction in English is meaningful and comprehensible to English-language learners (e.g., through the use of SI); and
    - ensure that assessment is linked to instructional objectives and informs instructional planning and delivery.

Virtually all schools in America are being called upon to provide educational services to students from linguistically- and culturally-diverse backgrounds. It is imperative for the well-being of these students, the communities in which they live, and the nation at large that these students be provided with the best education possible. Choosing and implementing effective education for English-language learners calls for an understanding of the available alternatives and a careful consideration of the needs and characteristics of a district's students, as well as its goals and resources.

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