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Word Study with English Learners in the Emergent Stage

The emergent stage of literacy development is characterized by a budding awareness of how print works and how oral language connects to written language. The emergent learner knows that speech can be written down and that words on a page can be read, but does not yet understand the code through which this happens. The emergent stage is a time of great discovery and excitement in literacy learning!

English learners at the emergent stage do more than connect print to language; they do it in a new language. While some students have been learning the vocabulary, syntax, and sounds of English from birth, English learners enter the realm of the written code in this new language with limited oral resources. These students critically need a language-rich classroom that provides multiple daily opportunities to talk, chant, sing, listen to comprehensible language, and connect English to what they know in their first language. Before we share more details about the emergent stage and the components of a rich early literacy program, let's take a peek into one language-rich classroom for English learners.

Ms. Rosa's kindergarten classroom is cheerful and active. She has a library with many picture books and nonfiction reference materials. Her science center has a display of different kinds of rocks and hands-on materials such as rock pieces, magnifying glasses, magnets, bowls, and spoons for students to use in their manipulations.

An easily accessible writing center contains paper products of all sorts and pens, pencils, markers, and crayons. Ms. Rosa has arranged the room with a floor space where the group can gather to meet, listen to stories, present work, sing, move, and share. She also has four large tables where students work on literacy and other projects. Her room is decorated with student writing and student-created artifacts, interesting posters relating to the current theme, and sign-up lists where students will put their name cards. She has labeled some of the major objects and areas in the class such as "library," "scissors," and "writing center."

The students in Ms. Rosa's class come from a variety of linguistic backgrounds including Spanish, Hmong, Somali, and Vietnamese. Most are learning English as a new language. At the moment, Ms. Rosa is guiding her students in a writing project. Each student has a picture of someone or something connected to the school—the custodian, the principal, special teachers, the play structure, the cafeteria, and so on. Students are writing about their pictures and will share them as a group in a few minutes. Some students are drawing the words to tell their stories; others have used squiggly lines; and still others, random strings of letters. One student is sounding out her words and putting the letters she believes fit the sounds she hears. Her paper says *K D S* ("clean the

school”). Ms. Rosa moves from student to student, modeling language and asking questions: “Yes, that is Mr. Yang, the assistant principal. What did you say about Mr. Yang? Do you know what he does?”

Following the writing activity, Ms. Rosa calls the students to the rug area, where they share their pictures and stories with each other. When students are unable to find the words to communicate in English, Ms. Rosa asks simple questions or encourages them to speak in their first language. Sometimes peers will help with a translation. With each sharing, Ms. Rosa clearly states the name of the person or object in each picture and has students try to say it along with her. On another day, she will use these pictures to play a guessing game. She will come back to these photos over and over throughout the year to reinforce meaningful vocabulary. This is also the way she helps students learn the names of the schoolmates and helpers in their classroom community.

Ms. Rosa understands that students beginning to learn about reading and writing in English need many opportunities to hear language, connect language to their experiences, practice language in supportive environments, and see the relationship between oral language and print. She has structured her literacy learning environment to provide maximum support and practice for her students.

FROM SPEECH TO PRINT WITH ENGLISH LEARNERS

All students bring many oral language resources with them to school. Most students know how to communicate their basic needs to the people who take care of them. They have vocabulary words for many of the people and objects in their lives, can distinguish and articulate the sounds that are used in their home language, and understand the patterns of the rhymes and stories that are told in their families. These strengths provide a foundation for connecting speech to print in the early literacy classroom. But how is the experience of learning about print in English different for those students who come to reading and writing without an oral language foundation in English?

English learners entering U.S. schools for the first time are likely to have less depth in their knowledge of English vocabulary and syntax than do their peers from English-speaking households. This limited experience with English words can influence other literacy skills for students. For example, they may perceive the sounds of English as though filtered through the framework of their home language. Consonant and vowel sounds may be “heard” as resembling sounds in the students’ home languages. For example, students from some Asian languages may hear /l/ and /r/ sounds as being the same. Phonological awareness skills such as **sound isolation** and **phonemic segmentation** are supported by students’ knowledge of a number of spoken words. For instance, students who know many words that start with /s/—*sun, sandwich, soap, school, store*—will find it easier to recognize and distinguish the /s/ sound in early literacy activities. Students who do not have a significant oral language base in English will need to have many opportunities to experience the rhythms and rhymes of language through poems, songs, and movement activities. These activities should introduce English sounds and rhythms and build on the home language experiences that students bring to the classroom.

What is key to literacy development for English learners in the emergent stage is that they use language with teachers and peers and see oral language they understand captured in print. English learners need structured opportunities to learn many new words to add to their repertoire so that these words can become the material of their literacy learning. Limited and informal experiences using oral English, like those associated with mainstream programs, will simply not be enough to support the kind of language development needed for English learners’ literacy development. Literacy teaching for English learners demands the dual task of teaching vocabulary and language patterns along with any specific reading or writing skill. Every day in the class-

Sound Isolation

The ability to orally separate a specific sound from a spoken word, such as identifying that the beginning sound in *lake, lion, and leaf* is /l/, or that the ending sound in *kite, pet, and hat* is /t/.

Phonemic Segmentation

The process of dividing a spoken word into the smallest units of sound within that word. The word *sun* can be divided or segmented into three phonemes: /s/ /uh/ /n/.

room and in each literacy lesson taught, vocabulary learning and language practice must be a key focus.

As we discussed in Chapter 2, students bring specific language and literacy resources with them to the classroom. Emergent English learners may be students at the same age and grade level as their monolingual English peers, who have been to school in English instructional programs but have not yet developed full fluency. At all grade levels, teachers may encounter students who come to their classroom with an equivalent grade level of reading and writing proficiency in a home language but limited literacy experiences in English. Although these students are emergent in English reading and writing skills, they are more literate in their home language and are likely to move quickly beyond the emergent stage as they transfer reading and writing skills from their first language into English. Teachers at many grade levels may also find emergent-level students who come to their grade-level classroom with limited literacy experiences in their home language and limited literacy experiences in English. Throughout this chapter we describe activities for a range of emergent English learners, including older learners.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EMERGENT STAGE OF READING AND SPELLING

Emergent readers “try out” reading and writing behaviors as their awareness of print and knowledge of writing conventions grow. At the early emergent level, students “pretend read” a story, mimicking the tone and content of what has been modeled to them in book-sharing experiences. Later, students reread texts that they have memorized—often without missing a word! Eventually, emergent readers notice the speech–print connection in the texts they are reading and they begin to fingerpoint as they reread memorized texts. This one-to-one correspondence, or *concept of word*, is highly connected to students’ developing phonemic awareness skills and facilitates both their learning of sight words and letter–sound correspondences.

English learners moving through the emergent stage profit from formal as well as informal opportunities to experience books and conversation. Remember, English learners have not had the same number of years of being immersed in book sharing and conversations in English monolingual English speakers. It will be difficult for English learners to invent their own stories based on the pictures in a book when their verbal planning is limited by their English vocabularies and knowledge of syntax. Allow students to “read” books using their home language. Teach students key vocabulary words as you introduce a new book; encourage them to tell stories using this vocabulary. For instance, Ms. Mason recently introduced her class to the book *Mary Wore Her Red Dress (and Henry Wore His Green Sneakers)* (Peek, 1998). She knew that after several readings, this book would become a favorite for students to reread to themselves and others. To support her English learners’ ability to do this, she spent some time with them introducing key vocabulary words: *dress, red, green, yellow, blue, brown, purple, orange, and pink*. In future lessons, she will practice some of the clothing words such as *sneakers, sweater, jeans, pants, shirt, and hat*. These important words will give her students immediate help in retelling the new book.

Emergent writers begin with random marks or scribbles, progress to representational drawing, and later move to linear and letter-like forms. Eventually, students begin to write with the letters of the English alphabet, and by the end of the emergent stage they incorporate letters that correspond to the salient sounds of words they are trying to spell. An early emergent writer may write a shopping list to “buy milk and eggs” as some scribble marks on a page. Later in development, perhaps the same list looks like three curly-cue lines. With more experience, the attempts take on letter-like shapes. When emergent writers begin to use real letters, their spellings are often random strings such as *AX, LTV, AAM* for the shopping list just mentioned. A major accomplishment has occurred when students begin to perceive that the sounds in the words they are at-

tempting to spell are related to the letters they choose to represent them. The late emergent speller may represent our previous shopping list as *B MK N Z* (“buy milk and eggs”)—representing the most obvious sounds heard.

English learners will exhibit the same kinds of emergent writing, but are likely to bring their background experiences with print to the developmental writing process. Students who come to school with limited exposure to print, no matter what age they are, may demonstrate writing that is less letter-like. Students whose home language script is very different in form from English (Arabic, Chinese, and others) will need time and experience to start writing “like English.” Depending on their home languages, immigrant students may also need added support to learn the left-to-right directionality of writing in English.

When students come to English schooling with some literacy skills in their home language, they may temporarily look like emergent learners, but they will quickly move into the beginning reader/letter name–alphabetic spelling stage. These students already have many of the skills that emergent learners are only developing—a knowledge of the connection between letters and the sounds they represent (the alphabetic principle), conventions of print such as directionality and spacing between words, and awareness of sounds in words (phonemic awareness). Their stay in the emergent level is only a temporary stopover to learn the shapes and names of English letters. This group will quickly be on its way to identifying and comparing the sound systems of the two languages in the beginning reader/letter name–alphabetic spelling stage described in the next chapter.

COMPONENTS OF EARLY LITERACY LEARNING

Personal Reader

An individual collection of familiar poems, dictated stories, or other pieces of text that students have memorized and can read with good accuracy. These reading materials are copied or typed and placed in a booklet for students to read again and again.

Group Experience Story

A chart story is created after students have shared an interesting experience together, such as a field trip, hands-on activity, or exciting read-aloud story. The teacher guides a small group of children, each in turn, to dictate a comment about the experience; their words are transcribed onto a piece of chart paper, and the story is reread for reading practice.

Several building blocks of literacy learning are addressed in the emergent stage. These include growing language and vocabulary skills, developing phonemic awareness, and learning the alphabet. These skills are enhanced as students learn to track print and develop a beginning sight-word vocabulary. Students at the emergent stage also refine their abilities to sort and categorize conceptually, and they attach language to their conceptual understandings. Our instruction for emergent learners thus involves many activities to develop vocabulary and concepts, to experience the rhythms and sounds of oral language and connect it to written texts, and to learn the letters of the alphabet.

In previous chapters we have outlined essential literacy activities for the classroom: *Read To*, *Read With*, *Write With*, *Word Study*, and *Talk With*—or *RRWWT*. These activities take place throughout the day, as described in Ms. Rosa’s kindergarten, during whole-group, small-group, and individual lessons with students. They happen for students in formats that vary from listening to interesting stories, to rereading familiar rhymes in a **Personal Reader** notebook, to constructing a **group experience story** that is reread and discussed over and over again. The essential literacy activities are evident when students sort objects, pictures, letters, and words into categories and reflect aloud on their learning. The essential literacy activities can become a routine part of your classroom’s literacy block; they can also be a part of integrated classroom themes that facilitate students’ content area and vocabulary learning. In the next section we offer some suggestions for implementing *RRWWT* with emergent learners.

Read To

Reading aloud to students is a critical component in the emergent literacy classroom and of special importance to English learners. While reading to students, teachers introduce and reinforce new vocabulary and oral language structures, share interesting and motivating texts that are beyond a student’s reading level, model fluent reading, and engage in discussions of content that encourage higher-order thinking. To make the most of the listening experience, English learners will need material that is engaging but not too difficult for them to understand.

Read to your students at the start of the day, at the end of the day, and during other transitional times throughout the school day. Read to your students whenever you can find a moment. Have a book of simple poems always at hand, and read one when you have 30 seconds to spare. Find a range of narrative and nonfiction texts to share aloud. Read notes, lists, and school announcements. Pay attention to the complexity of the message. Do your English learners understand the text? How do you know? Look for body cues such as eye contact and attentiveness. Do students respond to the humor? Can they make predictions about what is coming next? Check for understanding of key vocabulary words and important events in the material by engaging in discussion and review. Or have students “show you they know” with a drawing or demonstration. If you find that the material is above students’ heads, search out texts that deal with the same ideas using simpler language and more visual support. Patterned texts such as *Mary Wore Her Red Dress* (Peek, 1998) offer repetitive language and simple sentence structures that listeners can understand and echo along with the teacher during read-alouds.

In the pre-K or kindergarten classroom, your read-aloud sessions will be short in duration (5 to 15 minutes) and will often involve student participation such as helping to make sound effect noises or role-playing the story. Preview literature so that you can scaffold unknown vocabulary or complex language structures with students. Books with expressive illustrations or photos and easy-to-understand text will be critical. Consider taking a “book walk”—talking through the storyline—with English learners, or having them preview the material with someone who speaks their home language before they listen to a story in English with the whole class. Characterization in creative dramatics provides movement to your descriptions; for example, *walking with a cane*, *stirring soup with a large spoon*, and *walking slowly like a proud lion* are all characterizations that young children of all language levels can enjoy.

In the primary-grades classroom, the best read-aloud materials will be picture books and expository texts that have interesting themes and information expressed in uncomplicated language. Books with not more than three sentences of text per illustration are ideal. Read-aloud materials aimed at the whole class may be too difficult for English learners to understand without additional support. Plan to introduce your read-aloud text to English learners in a small-group guided lesson so that students will have the background and vocabulary needed to contextualize the material when it is read aloud. Look for bilingual editions of books, books on tape in other languages, and support personnel to read stories in the home language first. Students will understand much more of the text in English when they have already heard it in their home language.

Older emergent learners who are in upper-grade classrooms will find most of the content of read-aloud materials presented in class to be over their heads. Provide opportunities for students with limited English proficiency to discuss the material with bilingual students or aides who can translate for them before and after a read-aloud session. Provide English learners with simpler texts that focus on the same content. Use additional visuals for reference. Help students focus on three to five key vocabulary words in each read-aloud session, or let them listen to simpler books on tape while you are reading aloud a harder text. Do not expect English learners to sit for extended periods of time listening to material in English that is beyond their listening comprehension levels.

Read With

Spending time with the teacher in *Read With* activities is a key part of the literacy block time in an elementary classroom. Emergent readers need time to practice their blossoming skills with the support of a more experienced guide. This practice will reinforce one-to-one matching of oral language to print, support directionality, and teach beginning sight words. *Read With* activities are most effective when a teacher can work with a group of students who are at similar developmental levels so that activities are appropriate to their instructional level. Teachers are encouraged to implement a center rotation system

Provide older emergent learners with simpler texts, visual and other vocabulary support, and opportunities to interact with bilingual peers.

so they can work with small groups of students with similar needs over the course of the literacy block time, while other students participate in more independent activities.

Reading With students happens through a number of ongoing literacy experiences in the early education classroom. Pre-K and kindergarten teachers help students read along with big books and chart stories as they model tracking. By using enlarged text and having multiple opportunities to reread these stories, students will memorize the text and point to words as they follow along. Little leveled books with predictable text help students “try out” reading in highly supportive situations. Look for predictable texts with common language patterns and sentence frames such as “I can see a _____” or “There’s a _____ at the zoo,” and so forth. In this way, students not only get to practice the agency of reading, but they also learn vocabulary that is supported by illustrations and practice natural language patterns (Johnston, Invernizzi, & Juel, 1998).

Create a book box of familiar reading materials for each of your students. These book boxes should house little books that students have memorized and can read on their own. Include a Personal Reader in each student’s book box. The Personal Reader is a notebook or folder that contains typed-up copies of familiar poems, stories, and **dictated accounts** that students have memorized. Each time students reread a page of the Personal Reader, they can put a tally mark on it to document their efforts. Word banks can be created as students select familiar words to write on cards and add to a baggie of known words.

Dictated Accounts

Retellings, personal sharings, or other oral language samples you have written down from students.

Language Experience

After experiencing a real-world activity, student language is elicited and recorded in print.

Write With

Writing With emergent students is a time to share how spoken words get translated into print. Typical examples of how this is done include taking **Language Experience** dictations from individual students, creating group experience stories, and working with a Morning Message or shared writing. These formats are explained in depth in the emergent activities section that follows. As teachers model how to put words and sentences onto paper, they describe what they are doing, giving students insight into the encoding process. Teachers should focus on skills that are at the developmental level of their emergent learners, such as left-to-right sweep, spacing between words, and choosing the beginning letters of words.

Providing time for emergent learners to practice their own developmental spelling as we saw in Ms. Rosa’s kindergarten is also an excellent *Write With* activity. Developmental spelling challenges students to produce their best approximation of what English writing looks like. It also provides an informal assessment of students’ letter knowledge and phonemic awareness abilities. Look to see if students are writing with letters or other symbols. Notice if they are selecting words from the environment, their personal lives, or using any letter-sound associations. Students may do their own unassisted writing through journal activities or in free-writing assignments that include drawing a picture and writing about it. Have students reread their writing to you, and when you want to remember their message, write down their dictated words below their personal efforts. Your writing will serve as a model for students’ later approximations.

Scaffold your students’ writing to a greater or lesser degree. In the examples mentioned, dictated stories involve a high degree of teacher support. The student is required to tell the story, but the teacher or a tutor records it. Journal writing involves a high level of student responsibility and less teacher involvement. Always consider the task and the student as you implement *Write With* activities. There are times when your English learners will need a highly structured lesson, such as a piece of writing built on frame sentences, in order to learn a language pattern or to reduce the complexity of a task. For instance, instead of asking students who are just learning English to come up with their own stories from scratch, you can provide them a framework in which to include their ideas: “I like _____. I like _____. I like _____. But I don’t like _____.” (“I like to run. I like to jump. I like to eat. But I don’t like to go to bed.”) (Koch, 2000).

At other times, a more interactive approach is called for. Teachers often find that co-constructing a message with a student on paper or group of students on a chart is a useful way to support students' beginning writing skills. To create an interactive message on chart paper, work with students to generate a meaningful one-sentence message. Discuss how many words are in the sentence, and "think out loud" about the spelling and punctuation of it. Share the pen with students who feel they can write a certain letter or word on the chart paper. When your message is written, review the text for specific letters and other concepts of print. Have students highlight or circle the letters or words you are discussing.

Write With activities are most effective when they take place within the teacher-directed, small-group reading lesson. When done in the context of small groups, mini-lessons can be directed at the needs and developmental levels of the individuals involved. Certain *Write With* activities such as journaling may also be appropriate to independent centers or seatwork stations. Even when writing is used as an independent activity, students will profit from "reading" their story to a teacher at the end of the work time.

Emergent students at the kindergarten and pre-K level may have an attention span of only 5 minutes for *Write With* activities each day. Short lessons integrated regularly into small-group work will have a powerful impact in the long run. Emergent students in the primary grades will have longer attention spans and can draw and write on their own for 15 to 20 minutes. You may find that with increased fine motor skills, these students copy more words from books and environmental print in the classroom. Older emergent learners are likely to know the mechanics of handwriting and may copy or memorize a small set of essential words. Asking older emergent learners to use developmental spelling will help you understand what they have internalized about the English orthographic system.

Word Study

The focus of word study at the emergent level is to support students' learning of sounds, letters, and words in English. At the sound level, word study activities involve *phonological awareness* experiences such as working with rhymes in songs, books, and games; alliteration activities that encourage students to hear beginning sounds; and the blending and segmenting of sounds in words. Through these kinds of activities, students develop the phonemic awareness skills that will allow them to hear individual sounds in words and eventually attach related letters to represent those sounds.

Many word study activities at the emergent level are designed to encourage knowledge of the *alphabet and letter sounds*, often through the use of books, songs, games, and sorting and matching tasks. Because English learners have not grown up experiencing the English alphabet song and may have only limited exposure to print in English, they will require additional and more extensive opportunities to experience English letters in a variety of ways. The activity section that follows presents numerous ideas for sharing letters with students who have limited experiences in English.

Vocabulary and concept development are also crucial aspects of the word study component of the essential literacy activities. Concept sorts with pictures and objects extend English learners' higher-order thinking skills as they reinforce word learning. These sorts also help students practice the sorting procedure; students who are not yet reading, and those who are just learning the English vocabulary for the pictures, will still be able to profit from sorting by concepts (see Figure 4-1).

Word study activities are an integral part of the teacher-guided, small-group lesson during your literacy block time. If you have 20 minutes to work with each small group, plan to spend 6 to 8 minutes on the word study component. On a typical day you may use this 6 to 8 minutes to introduce a new concept sort or letter matching game and listen for words in a story that sound alike at the beginning. Your word study lesson can also be integrated into other components of the lesson such as your *Write With* activities. For instance, you can have students write a page for a

Materials: Picture cards for sorts

Procedure:

1. Select up to 10 pictures from the sort for the vocabulary study.
2. Preview these pictures with students. Name the picture and have students repeat the name.
3. Talk about the pictures. Have students generate examples. Teacher paraphrases and provides a simple definition. For example, in a transportation-related sort, Edgar may say, “I see a **jeep** on TV.” Paraphrase the student response, for example, “Edgar saw a **jeep** on TV.” Provide a simple definition of the word, for example, “A **jeep** is like a square car that can go off the road.”
4. If students do not have enough English words to say something about a picture, the teacher should move into a more directive role. For example, “This is a tractor. A tractor helps a farmer plant.” Body language and translating the definition into a student’s home language is recommended to support this new language learning.
5. When all of the cards have been discussed, chant each word as a group one last time.

FIGURE 4-1 Previewing Vocabulary with English Learners Before Sorting

Photograph Library

A collection of photographs illustrating common words and everyday activities, usually organized by topics such as household items, colors, actions, tools, food, and so forth. These photograph collections are available from commercial publishers and provide a useful tool for teachers to clarify their instruction and develop new vocabulary with students.

English learning classroom. See the list of language development resources at the end of this book for sources of these materials.

Talk With

A crucial component of an effective literacy program is having time for students to put their language learning into practice through *Talk With* activities, and this is even more crucial for English learners. Remember, it is hard to connect literacy to language in the classroom if there is no talking going on! Integrate conversation and dialogue many times throughout your school day. Structure regular routines at the beginning and end of the day and during small-group lessons. You do not need to have a separate time of the day for *Talking With*. Here are some examples: Structure community circle discussions on a regular basis. If procedures are well known and input can be framed with a starter sentence, English learners are likely to feel comfortable about contributing. For example, Ms. Sanders’ kindergarten students have learned that every day in their class they will go around the circle and contribute one idea to a class discussion. At first, many of the English learners were shy about speaking up, so they “passed” on their turn. With a predictable routine and a simple starter sentence such as “This weekend, I will . . .” or “My favorite animal is . . .,” the students have begun to contribute regularly.

Build in partner sharing as you share literature and nonfiction texts in class. Encourage students to read their writing in an Author’s Chair format, and let peers give feedback. Ask open-ended questions and leave wait time for students to think and respond. Call on all students over the course of the day. Find ways to limit teacher talk, and open the floor to more student voices. For example, instead of always asking students to respond to the teacher (when only one child can talk at a time), ask the students to turn and talk to the person beside them to answer a question, offer a personal response, or ask a question. This increases the amount of talk time dramatically and gives

personal alphabet book featuring a letter you worked with in word study or write a traveling story on a day you did a transportation concept sort.

The content of your concept sorts and vocabulary development may look different for various age groups of emergent learners. Young students will likely be working with simple concepts and vocabulary involving items such as living things, colors and shapes, or toys. Primary-age students are ready for more complex topics such as items around town, weather and related objects, or occupations. Older emergent learners should be exposed to concept sorts appropriate to their grade level such as technology, biology, and geography. Older emergent learners will need pictures and other visual support materials that do not look like they came from a preschool classroom. **Photograph libraries** and ESL picture dictionaries for older learners provide useful references for the

less-verbal children a chance to talk in a low-risk setting. English language learners can be paired with peers who speak their native language or with monolingual-English speakers. Also provide opportunities for students to sing, chant, and tell stories. Set the context of your classroom to be accepting of *all* students' voices and to show respect even when students do not know the "right" answer or the right word.

Older emergent learners in particular need opportunities to dialogue with fellow students about the content of what they are learning. Let talk be a bridge to the content they cannot yet read on their own. Encourage bilingual peers to translate what is being learned for students with less proficiency in English.

The rest of this chapter outlines numerous specific teaching activities for structuring a variety of language-rich experiences for your students. These activities can be used for informal assessment of language development, and will help students to hear rhymes, syllables, and sounds in words; develop new vocabulary; share stories; and see their words written down in English.

Activities for English Learners in the Emergent Stage

Forty-five activities are provided for this stage that complement the fundamental activities presented as *RRWWT*. The activities are numbered and organized under basic headings: Concept Books and Sorts, Talk With and Read With Activities, and Alphabet Knowledge.

CONCEPT BOOKS AND SORTS

Concept Book Walks 4-1

Materials. Gather a collection of simple concept books to share with a small group of English-learning students. The best books to choose have photographs or clear pictures so that vocabulary is easily understood. Often these concept books will be in the toddler or "board book" sections of bookstores, but it is important to choose books that are not too babyish. Some examples of engaging concept books include the following:

- My First Animal Board Book* (Zarick, 2004)
- Panda Big, Panda Small* (Cobrerera, 1999)
- Horn to Toes and in Between* (Boynton, 2000)
- The Eye Book* (LeSieg, 2001)
- Berenstain Bears, Bears on Wheels* (Berenstain, 1969)
- Going Places* (Parr, 2002)
- From Head to Toe* (Carle, 1997).

Procedures. In your small-group lesson, lead students through the book, making the words come alive with dramatic effects or body language. Encourage students to act out or share experiences about the words or concepts being introduced. For example, while reading Eric Carle's *From Head to Toe*, invite students to move along with the actions of animals in the story. Read the story, point out the names and pictures of individual animals, have students touch the part of their own body represented on the page, and encourage students to chant the lines as they act them out. Make the most of these simple concept books. Keep them easily accessible around the classroom so that students can come back to review them whenever they have a chance.

Bilingual Concept Books 4-2

Materials. Concept books that are written in two languages can teach you about your students' home languages while your students are learning English. Bilingual concept books also support students in making connections between their primary language and English, and this will help cement important vocabulary and conceptual learning. Some example bilingual concept books to use in this lesson include these:

- My Opposites/Mis Opuestos* (and others in the series) (Emberley, 2000)
- Taking a Walk/Caminando* (and others in the series) (Emberley, 1994)
- My Family and I/Mi Familia y Yo* (and others in the English/Spanish Foundations Series) (Rosa-Mendoza, 2001)
- Food: La nourriture* (and others in the Bilingual First Books series) (Beaton, 2003)
- Where's the Kitten?/Kote Ti Chat La Ye?: English/Haitian Creole Bilingual* (and others in the Photoflap Board Books series) (Christian, 2005)
- America: A Book of Opposites/Un Libro de Contrarios* (Nikola-Lisa, 2001)
- Brian Wildsmith's Farm Animals* (Available in seven languages including Tagalog, Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish, and Chinese) (Wildsmith, 2001).

(Additional examples of bilingual books and bookstores that sell them are included in the resource section at the end of this book.)

Procedures. Share the bilingual concept books with your students, and encourage them to read the words in their home language. Have them chant and act out the words in English. Ask students if the translation in the book is one that they would use in their home, or if they have a different way to say it. Keep a small reference section of bilingual concept books for students to use when they are struggling with a word. Use the bilingual books to compare letters and sounds in the two languages. Encourage monolingual English-speaking students to learn words in other languages by referring to the bilingual concept books, too!

Variations. Have your students make bilingual concept books that expand on the words in the commercial books, and add them to the classroom collection or donate them to a partner class.

Using Illustrated Word Books 4-3

Materials. Another important source of vocabulary activities for English learners is illustrated books of words or simple picture dictionaries. These texts can be used as student reference materials or as the source material and content for word-learning games. Some examples of these books include the following:

- DK Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (McIlwain, 1994)
- My Big Word Book: Over 1000 Essential First Words and Pictures* (and others in the Smart Kids series) (Priddy, 2002)

My Big Animal Book (and others in the Big Ideas for Little People series) (Priddy, 2002)
Richard Scarry's Best Word Book Ever (Scarry, 1999).

And for older emergent students:

Word by Word (Molinsky, 2005).

(Additional examples are included in the bibliography at the end of this book.)

Procedures. Introduce these resource books by pointing out the word–picture match, and any thematic or alphabetical organization to the text. Encourage students to use the books to look up and copy words. Students can use picture dictionaries to help them create their own desktop word walls or personal picture dictionaries. Use the photos or drawings in the books to create concept sorts.

Variations. Play “I Spy” on individual pages of word books for students to guess what you are thinking of. For instance, on the “around town” page of a picture word book, tell students you are thinking of something that travels on the road. It has tires and carries people going to work. People ring the bell when they want it to stop. Provide clues until students can identify “bus.”

Concept Sorts with Pictures 4–4 Through 4–12

Materials. Table 4-1 lists the picture sorts that are included in the appendix of this book. The final column offers suggestions for ways these cards can be sorted. Make copies of these sorts, cut them apart, and place them in envelopes or small plastic bags. To help keep multiple sets organized, consider using various colors of paper, or putting a small colored dot on each card so that it can easily be reorganized if students’ cards get mixed up.

Procedures. Demonstrate with students how to sort pictures into categories. For example, a concept sort related to transportation, such as Activity 4-14, features pictures of cars, vans, motorcycles, buses, skateboards, boats, planes, and so forth. In an initial closed sort, the teacher guides students to sort the pictures by water, air, and land travel. Later, students may be encouraged to sort the items by whether or not they have personally experienced this form of transportation. At other times the students may do an open sort, where they create the categories. One student sorted by whether the vehicle held one person or a whole family. Another student sorted by how many wheels the item had. A list of possible ways to sort the picture cards is listed in column 3 of Table 4-1. You and your students are invited to think of all kinds of variations of these sorts, too!

Variations. Explicit vocabulary instruction fits very well with concept sort activities. Share the names of picture cards being used in sorts. Have students echo these names for you. Let them “quiz” others to see if they remember the names of each picture. Have students sort the picture cards into a group for which they do remember the English name and a group for which they don’t. Encourage them to see if they can make the “don’t know” group smaller each time. Have students use their home language to describe the pictures, while you help them to learn the English labels.

Other Considerations. In addition to using the resources in this book, you can also find pictures for concept sorts in old magazines, calendars, or commercially produced picture or photo libraries or by searching for images through a search engine online. Creating a picture collection is a task in which students, family members, and community volunteers can often help. This is also one way that your collection of pictures can begin to represent the variety and focus of your school community and the themes that you teach in class.

TABLE 4-1 Overview of Concept Sorts in This Book

Sort	Cards Provided (See Appendix)	Ideas
Furniture and Household Items 4-4	Broom, kitchen table, dining room chair, armchair, couch, lamp, door, house, kitchen, mop, rug, roof, tub, towel, vacuum, window, bed, closet, light switch, refrigerator, stairs, television, stereo, stove	In your house/not, plugged in/not, heavy/light
Living Things 4-5	Cat, dog, fish, pig, oak tree, snail, bird, cow, duck, fox, man, woman, boy, girl, plant, spider, flower, grass, vine, fruit tree, pine tree, whale, baby, horse	Animals/plants, legs/no legs, live in a house/live outdoors
Occupations 4-6	Doctor, police officer, firefighter, teacher, sales clerk, postal worker, bus driver, mother, father, artist, construction worker, custodian, soldier, librarian, farmer, cook, astronaut, gardener, banker, actor, painter, veterinarian, truck driver	You'd like to do/not, someone you know/not, work outdoors/work indoors
Personal Care 4-7	Comb, brush, toothpaste, towel, washcloth, tissue, hairbrush, glasses, soap, sink, toilet, person sleeping, bowl of fruit, hair dryer, shaving cream, razor, vitamins, scarf, mittens, lotion, shampoo, floss, fingernail clippers, bandage	In bathroom/not, cleans you/helps you in other ways
School and Office Items 4-8	Key, chair, desk, pen, pencil, stapler, lined paper, drawing paper, clock, scissors, envelope, paperclip, glue, school, table, tape, book, map, waste basket, markers, crayons, computer, cupboard, shelves	School/office, big/small, use to draw
Technology and Numbers 4-9	Computer, keyboard, digital alarm clock, wall clock, thermometer, calendar, watch, checkbook, plug, remote control, video recorder/player, camera, video camera, telephone, printer, microwave, date (e.g., March 12, 2007), $2 + 1 = 3$, $7 - 6 = 1$, dice, ruler, measuring tape, price tag, receipt	Has numbers/no, plugs in/no, used at school/no
Toys 4-10	Block, drum, board game, kite, toy car, doll, jacks, ball, teddy bear, scooter, train set, Etch-a-sketch, peg game, toy boat, dinosaur figure, Legos, sand bucket and shovel, paint set, model plane, toy house, comic book, baby book, rattle, puzzle	Outside/inside, by yourself/with others, noisy/quiet
Transportation 4-11	Car, van, motorcycle, bus, train, bicycle, skateboard, subway train, school bus, boat, airplane, horse with rider, ship, sled, skates, truck, jet, sailboat, unicycle, taxi, horse and cart, jeep, tractor, helicopter	Water/air/land, one person/lots of people, have you done it/no
Weather and Related Objects 4-12	Sun, clouds, rain, snow, wind, sunglasses, scarf, mittens, gloves, umbrella, galoshes, sunscreen, jacket, bathing suit, sandals, sunrise, night (moon), fall, tree, rake, snowman, raincoat, thermometer, beach umbrella, fan	Seasons, nature/man-made, for cold/hot weather

GAMES USING CONCEPT PICTURE SORTS

The picture cards you use in concept sorts can be transformed into vocabulary-building games without much difficulty. Here are some sample ideas:

Memory or Concentration Games 4-13

Materials. Make two copies of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *School and Office Item* pictures. Cut the pictures apart.

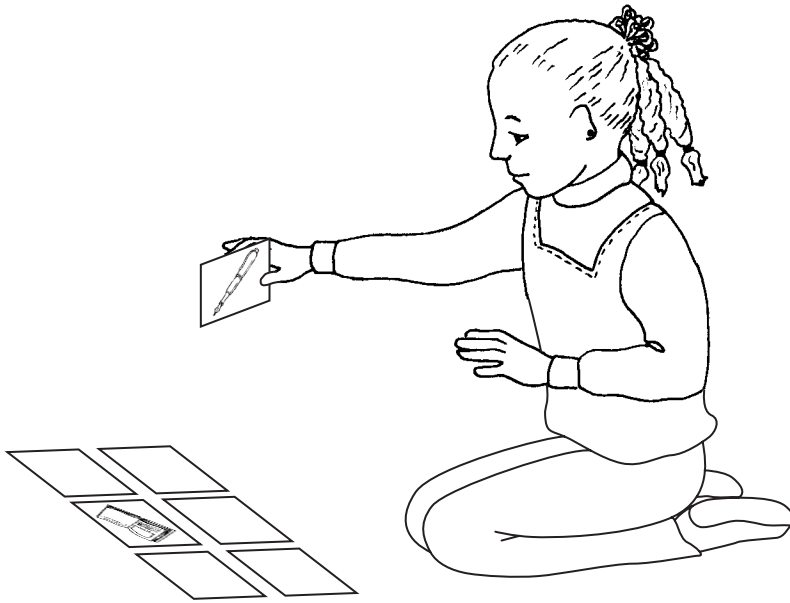


FIGURE 4-2 Students Can Play Matching Games with Concept Picture Cards

Procedures. Shuffle the cards and lay them face down on the table or floor. Students turn two pictures over to try to make matches such as two pencils, two desks, or two staplers (see Figure 4-2). If students cannot remember the name of items when they make a match, they may not keep it as a pair. However, someone (a teacher, assistant, volunteer, or peer) should be ready to supply the English word.

Musical Cards 4-14

Materials. Make a copy of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *Furniture and Household Items* cards. Cut the pictures apart.

Procedures. Spread individual picture cards around a rug area or on desktops in your classroom. As you

play a bit of music, have students move from picture to picture seeing how many names they can identify. When the music stops, each student must find one and only one card to pick up. The teacher may ask students to say the name of their picture to the whole group. For instance, students reply with “broom,” “table,” “vacuum,” and so forth. If students can’t remember the name of their item, they can ask a peer for help.

Variations. The teacher can also have students do physical sorts with the item they are holding. “If what you have belongs in the kitchen, come stand over here.” Or, “If you need to get plugged in to work, make a group over here.” Students can also think of ways that the household items could be described and sorted. There are so many possibilities! Another variation of *Musical Cards* is for the teacher to ask questions about the items students are holding: “Who has something that helps us cook?” “Who has something that helps us clean?” “Who has something that makes sound?” Specific sentence patterns such as “I have a _____” can be practiced in this way. After each round, the music starts again and students find a new card to work with.

I Spy 4-15

Materials. Make a copy of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *Occupations* cards. Cut the pictures apart.

Procedures. In a small group of students, take four or five cards from the concept picture sort. For example, you might take the doctor, police officer, firefighter, teacher, and sales clerk cards from the *Occupations* sort. The teacher gives clues about a focus picture: “I’m thinking of someone who comes when there is a fire. This person rides in a big truck that has hoses for spraying water.” Students guess which person the teacher is thinking of. As students’ language proficiency increases, they can take turns being the “teacher” and being the leader of the *I Spy* game. Students may also be encouraged to add statements about the picture card once it has been identified (“There was a firefighter on TV last night.”)

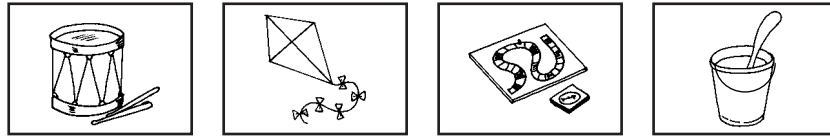


FIGURE 4-3 Concept Picture Cards Can Be Used to Learn and Practice Language

Build a Story 4-16

Materials. Make a copy of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *Toys* cards. Cut the pictures apart.

Procedures. Use the set of concept picture cards to help students create oral or written stories. For example, give four to six pictures from the *Toys* set to each student in a small group (see Figure 4-3). Have students create their own stories about the pictures they have. “I went to the store with my mom and we saw some toys. I asked her to buy me a train set, but she said ‘no.’ Then I saw a kite and a dinosaur toy and blocks, but she still said ‘no.’ Finally, when we were leaving the store she said I could have one thing because I was good. I got a comic book.” Students can tell their stories to each other, or try to make one long group story.

Variations. The teacher may choose to write a line from each student’s story on chart paper for the group to reread.

Charades 4-17

Materials. Make a copy of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *Personal Care* cards. Cut the pictures apart.

Procedures. Review the set of pictures with a group of students. Have students take turns secretly picking a card and acting it out for others in the group to guess. Action words such as *sleeping*, *combing*, and *washing* will be especially good for this game, but nouns such as *toothpaste*, *finger nail clippers*, and *hair dryer* will also be fun to try!

Concept Board Games 4-18

The picture cards for concept sorts can also be incorporated into board games that students play independently with their peers.

Materials. Make a copy of the *Weather and Related Objects* picture sort cards included in the appendix of this book. Use one of the blank board game models from the appendix to create your own weather board game by drawing or pasting some weather-related graphics on the game board.

Procedures. To play, the student rolls a die, then turns over a picture card—let’s say *raincoat*. If the student can say the name of the picture, she can move the number of spaces on the die. If not, she must stay where she is. To make this game more challenging for advanced speakers, students may be asked to put the word in a sentence before moving ahead (“I have a yellow raincoat.”), or be asked to share as many describing words about the item as the number on the die (“It is slippery. It is shiny. It feels wet.” Three moves.)

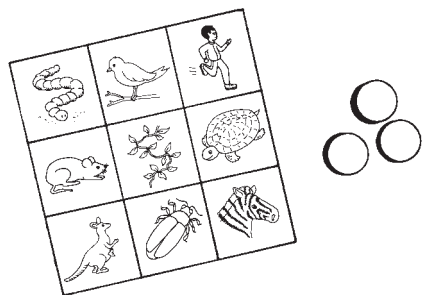


FIGURE 4-4 An Example Bingo Card

Bingo 4-19

Materials. Make multiple copies of one of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book, such as the *Living Things* cards (see Figure 4-4). Cut the pictures apart. Teachers can use the cut-apart picture

cards to create Bingo cards for students to play with. For example, the cards from the *Living Things* set can be mixed up so that every student's Bingo card has nine pictures from the collection, laid out in a grid format. No two Bingo boards should have exactly the same pictures in the same order.

Procedures. A teacher or student leader can call out the picture names as they are picked, and students use tokens to cover the items on their board. When a "Bingo" or "Blackout" is achieved, that student wins. Encourage students to repeat the names of all of the pictures on their boards when the game is over.

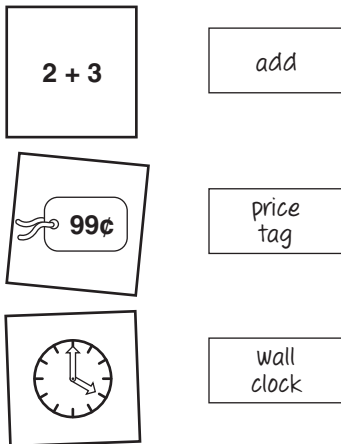


FIGURE 4-5 Students Can Create Labels and Match Them to Pictures

Concept Picture Sorts for Older Emergent Students 4-20

Materials. Make a copy of one or more of the picture sorts provided in the appendix of this book. Cut the pictures apart. Cut blank cards for students to write the name of each item on its own card.

Procedures. Have older, emergent students write the names of objects onto word cards, such as the *Technology and Numbers* cards, and then match the pictures with the labels (see Figure 4-5). These labels may be done bilingually if students are literate in their home language.

Variations. Older emergent learners may also appreciate having copies of the concept picture pages to keep in a word study notebook for reference. They can write the label for each picture on the page. Students can also use these reference pages to support themselves when completing simple writing projects.

TALK WITH AND READ WITH ACTIVITIES

Rhythm, Rhyme, and Phonological Awareness *Frog on the Log* 4-21

Materials. Start with a simple rhyme or poem that uses natural language patterns. Many excellent rhymes and chants are available in books of poetry, children's songbooks, and collections of jump-rope jingles. Look for a rhyme that is fairly simple, and is presented in a relatively natural oral language pattern (e.g., "Rain, rain, go away, come again another day"). Rhythm and rhyme will help students memorize the verses.

Although it is valuable to share the cultural heritage passed along through classic nursery rhymes in English, it is also important to remember that many of these rhymes may appear to be total nonsense to English learners. "Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle, the cow jumped over the moon. The little dog laughed to see such sport, and the dish ran away with the spoon" is one example. This rhyme has many nonsensical phrases and ideas that may be difficult for an English learner to understand. What is a fiddle? What does "such sport" mean? How could a dish run away with a spoon? Memorizing such a rhyme will be especially difficult for an English learner when there are too many unknown words and the student does not have many clues as to the meaning of the text. In addition, spending a lot of time learning nonessential words is not the best use of teaching time at the early stages of English language development.

Procedure. Read the poem to your students several times, and encourage them to join in. Use expressive language, body motions, and rhythmic clapping so that students can participate more fully. Write the poem on a piece of chart paper or sentence strips in a pocket chart and point to the words as you reread the poem. Add pictures to aid understanding. In later readings, cut apart the chart or sentence strips and help students put the poem back together in the correct order. Make a notebook-sized copy of the poems you have learned and have students put them in their Personal Readers (folders of familiar materials for students to reread). Students will “try out” reading as they come back to these rhymes over and over, and their tracking, sight-word reading, and phonological awareness skills will get much needed reinforcement.

Variations. Letter and counting songs like “Five Little Ducks Went Out One Day” help students internalize the alphabet, numbers, and the days of the week in English.

Rhymes in Other Languages 4-22

A concept of rhyme will set a foundation for students’ later development of more discrete phonological awareness skills. To scaffold this process, consider bringing rhymes from other languages into your classroom program.

Materials. Find rhymes from other languages by researching your local public library or the resource books and vendors listed at the end of this book. Your classroom parents and neighborhood community members are especially good resources for sharing the oral language traditions of your students. Many immigrant languages are primarily based on oral traditions, and sharing children’s rhymes is a powerful way to bring parents into the classroom learning community!

A fun online resource for poems from around the world is Mama Lisa’s World: Kid Songs from Around the World (<http://www.mamalisa.com/world/atoz.html>).

Here is an example of a rhyme about frogs and toads in Spanish that all students will enjoy learning:

Los Sapitos
La ranita soy yo
Glo, glo, glo.
El sapito eres tú
Glu, glu, glu.
Cantemos así
Gli, gli, gli.
Que la lluvia se fue
Gle, gle, gle.
Y la ronda se va
Gla, gla, gla.

(Traditional)

Procedures. Follow the same procedures listed in Activity 4-24 to help your students memorize this poem. Encourage native speakers to help others get the rhythm and pronunciation right. Act out the poem or clap to its beat. Have students point to the words as they reread it over numerous occasions.

Ask your students if they have ever heard the rhyme you have selected. Encourage them to help you pronounce it correctly, and ask them to tell you what the words mean. After helping your students memorize the rhyme, show them how to fingertip to the text you have written on paper.

Rhymes to Assess Concept of Word in English and Spanish 4-23

Here we give sample rhymes in both English and Spanish that illustrate an opportunity to informally assess *concept of word*.

English Rhymes to Assess Concept of Word in Text

Materials. Select one of the following rhymes and copy it onto a piece of chart paper or sentence strips for the pocket chart.

*Mix a pancake,
Stir a pancake,
Pop it in the pan;
Fry the pancake,
Toss the pancake,
Catch it if you can.*

Christina G. Rosetti

*Rain on the green grass,
Rain on the tree,
Rain on the rooftop,
But not on me!*

Procedures. Teach your students one of the rhymes orally before doing this activity with the printed version. Practice the rhyme many times, using any support cues you can think of, such as body movements, voice intonation, or pictures reflecting the text. When your students have memorized the rhyme, introduce the written version on a chart or printed page. Model how you point to the words as you read and then have the children read along with you. Ask a student to read the rhyme to you and point to each word along the way. Notice the student's fingerpointing accuracy: Does she correctly match the word she is saying to the word she is pointing to? Do multiple-syllable words such as *pancake* or *rooftop* throw her off? What happens when she gets to the end of a printed sentence but hasn't yet finished saying the line? These observations will let you know whether or not your student has developed concept of word. After you have finished your assessment, model how to fingerpoint read by touching each word as you recite the rhyme. Do this a second time and ask your students to say the rhyme with you chorally. In a subsequent *Read With* session, take turns echo reading line by line. Have the student echo read and fingerpoint to each word in a line after you model.

Spanish Rhymes to Assess Concept of Word in Text

Materials. The Spanish language has far fewer one-syllable words than does English, so students attempting to fingerpoint words in a rhyme are immediately thrust into the multiple-syllable word challenge. Here are two relatively simple rhymes that you can use to informally assess your Spanish-speaking students' concept of word in Spanish. Select one of the following rhymes and copy it onto a piece of chart paper or sentence strips for the pocket chart. The first rhyme is about the sun, the second about a snail.

El Sol

*El sol que yo pinto
de lindo color
nos brinda su luz,
también su calor.*

Traditional

El Caracol

*Aquel caracol,
que va por el sol,
en cada ramita,
lleva una flor.*

Traditional

Procedures. As you would in English, help your students to memorize the rhyme by repeated practice and by adding physical and visual clues. When students know the rhyme by heart, ask them to fingerpoint the words as they read from a chart or paper version. Notice if your students are able to correctly touch the words they are reading. When and how do they get off track? Do they attempt to recover their rhythm by starting the line again or noticing beginning letters? The answers to these questions will give you many insights into your students' developing concept of word. Now go back and show your students how to fingerpoint read as outlined earlier in this activity.

TALK WITH ACTIVITIES

Sharing Stories 4-24

One way to learn more about students' oral language proficiencies in English (and their home languages) is to elicit personal narratives about exciting real-life events. In this way, teachers have an opportunity to see students using language in a group setting with peers, where maximum fluency is likely to exist.

Materials. Come prepared to share an interesting, real-life story with your students, one that you hope will spark stories of their own. If your story is thematic, bring support materials such as simple word books or concept sort cards such as those in the appendix of this book.

Procedures. In Chapter 2 of this book we described using *Tell a Story to Get a Story* (McCabe & Bliss, 2003) as an informal oral language assessment. This technique may be used on a regular basis informally in your small-group lessons as well. Sharing stories is a good way to open a lesson, find out about students' background experiences, and "prime the pump" for the upcoming activities. Share your story with enthusiasm. Try to make it as dramatic as possible. When you are finished, ask an open-ended question to get students to tell their own stories. As they share, ask follow-up questions as necessary. Bring out your picture resources to help in case students have difficulty with specific vocabulary words. Figure 4-6, Mr. Chang's Lesson, illustrates how one teacher implemented this lesson.

Variations. If time permits, build on *Sharing Stories* by having students do a Language Experience or group experience story (see Activity 4-28). This provides an

Mr. Chang is a kindergarten teacher who combines a sharing-stories activity with a concept sort and a brief phonemic awareness lesson. Mr. Chang is working with a group of six English learners in his kindergarten class. Today he will focus on building the vocabulary of animal names, and he will do some phonemic awareness tasks to discriminate the beginning sounds in words. He knows that students need some meaningful words to work with in order to participate in phonemic awareness activities. He has decided to use *Tell a Story to Get a Story* as a way to get students talking. Mr. Chang begins, “I saw something very exciting this morning before I came to school—something I had never seen before. I looked out of my window at home, and in a little grassy area I saw a wild rabbit. It was sitting still, and every once in a while it would hop down the way. It did not see me, so it wasn’t scared. I have never seen a rabbit by my house before. I didn’t even know that rabbits live there! I wonder where it sleeps. Have you ever seen an animal that you can tell us about?”

Mr. Chang calls on students to share their experiences, and asks clarifying or open-ended questions as needed to support their narratives. If students cannot name the animal they have seen, he pulls out the animal sort picture cards to see if they can point to the animal they are discussing. He also has simple picture dictionaries or a photo library set at hand to help them point out their animals as needed.

Once students have had an opportunity to share their stories, Mr. Chang moves to a picture sort of animal cards. He starts by sorting the cards into “Animals we told stories about” and “Animals we didn’t.” Next he moves into a sort of wild animals and animals that live with people. In each round of sorts, students work with the teacher to remember and repeat the animal names and sort them into categories. Finally, Mr. Chang uses this new vocabulary to discuss beginning sounds. He works with students to find animal names that sound alike at the beginning such as *cat–cow*, *fox–fish*, *dog–duck*, and *bee–bug*. After all the correct matches have been made, the teacher picks three pairs and mixes them up. He hands individual cards to students and asks them to find the person whose animal starts with the same sound. Students must say the name of each animal out loud to find this sound match.

FIGURE 4-6 Mr. Chang’s Lesson

opportunity to connect oral language to written words, and the stories will be available in future lessons to examine conventions of print and letter–sound correspondences. It will also provide comprehensible text for students to use in repeated readings of familiar materials.

Language Experience Dictations 4-25

Use students’ background experiences and knowledge of English to create texts that you know they will understand. The Language Experience Approach (Stauffer, 1980) shows students the connection between oral language and print, validates students’ experiences, and helps teachers understand their students’ oral language development.

Materials. It is usually helpful to have a warm-up conversation or a hands-on experience to lead into the language experience dictation. For instance, the *Sharing Stories* activity (Activity 4-27) prepares students for drawing and dictating a story about an animal they have seen. A field trip or an in-class activity such as making play dough, constructing a house with blocks, or observing a pet hamster are also examples of experiences that can lead to a dictation. Thus, materials will vary depending on the activity you choose. Have drawing and writing materials available for the students to illustrate their experience.

Procedures. Provide an interesting activity such as making pancakes as you model the use of vocabulary such as *batter*, *sugar*, or *spoon*. Encourage the students to talk about

what they see and do for the “language experience.” Then invite individual students to offer sentences that you write down on a paper. Help each student to shape a sequential coherent account that is not too long. Repeat the sentences, pointing to the words, and have the student read along with you. Finally, ask the student to reread the dictation to you while pointing to each word. Make a copy of the dictation for the child to reread and illustrate. Keep the dictation in the student’s Personal Reader folder to reread on an ongoing basis and for harvesting words for word banks. This can be used as another informal assessment of the child’s concept of word.

Considerations. Language experience dictations are designed to bridge the natural language of students to the printed word. Students who are learning English as a new language or who speak dialectal variations of academic English may use nonstandard forms in their oral speech. For example, one student recently dictated the phrase “He goed to the store to get a cake.” A teacher may be torn about whether to write this language verbatim for the student, or whether to correct the sentence to “He went to the store to get a cake.” On the one hand, the student will probably reread the text as spoken, and when he gets to the verb, he will say “goed.” If the word has been written as “went,” she will misread the text. On the other hand, many teachers feel uncomfortable having students reread text that may reinforce incorrect patterns. You will need to make a decision in context about which approach is most appropriate for the situation. If the primary goal is to show the oral language to written language connection, and this story is not aimed at a wider audience, write exactly what the child has said. If you can rephrase the sentence for the child and she repeats it correctly (e.g., “He *went* to the store.”), and if the story will be shared with others, use the occasion as a teachable moment to correct and practice the standard language form.

Group Experience Stories 4-26

Group experience dictations provide a way for students to see their spoken words take form in much the same way that individual language experience activities do, this time in a small-group context.

Materials. Provide a memorable activity for students—a field trip, a hands-on science or art experience, a construction project—anything that involves the senses and sparks interest. Materials will vary depending on the specific activity. You will also need chart paper and colored markers to write students’ sentences.

Procedures. Pull aside a group small enough so that you can see each person’s eyes as you reread the text. Usually groups of four to eight students work well, and this ensures that everyone in the group has a chance to create a sentence. Elicit a comment about the experience from each student in turn, and write these statements on a large chart of paper. For example: “Mohamed said, ‘My airplane went in the tree.’ Marika said, ‘I made a paper airplane that went up and down.’” Some teachers find it helpful to change the color of the text to differentiate each student’s comment.

When all of the students’ sentences have been written, reread the chart as you fingerpoint to each word. Discuss and clarify specific words and conventions of print. Students will love reconnecting to the meaningful text of the shared group experience, and will eagerly point out what each of their peers said!

Variations. Students can also be invited to dictate sentences that fit a predetermined pattern selected by the teacher that introduces targeted vocabulary or reinforces language from a familiar book. If the focus is on color words and clothing (after reading *Mary Wore Her Red Dress*) the account might read like this: “María said, ‘I wore my yellow shirt.’ Kia said, ‘I wore my pink shorts.’ Bao said, ‘I wore my blue sneakers.’” Or an account about pets might read “Ramón has a dog for a pet. Leeza has a cat for a pet.”

ALPHABET KNOWLEDGE

My Name, Your Name 4-27

Students' names are a great source of meaningful print for learning words and letters!

Materials. You will need pieces of cardstock approximately 3×7 inches. Write the name of each student in your class clearly on its own piece.

Procedures. At transitional times in the school day, use these cards as flash cards to help students begin to memorize each other's names. Use the name cards to select class helpers or a "student of the day." Play games with the name cards: Have students pick a name at random and deliver it to the correct person; use physical actions such as "hop" to Yasmin's name, "skip" to Miguel's name; use the name cards for students to "sign into class" in the morning or express their opinion on a topic of the day.

As students become more familiar with each other's names, use the cards to do group sorts. Lead the group to sort by how many letters each name has, or by whether it contains a certain letter, such as *O*. Eventually, have students sort the names by beginning letters. Work with names in each letter group to see if they sound the same at the beginning. Compare these groups to alphabet books that feature names such as *A My Name Is Alice* (Bayer, 1992) or *What's Your Name? From Ariel to Zoe* (Sanders, 1995).

Variations. The name cards may also be used to stimulate oral language in a variety of ways. In a small group, choose a student's name card and encourage other students in the group to make sentences about the featured person. "Miguel has a green shirt." "Miguel runs fast." "Miguel rides the bus." The teacher may choose to write some of the sentences down on chart paper for a group experience story. Another way to elicit discussion is for students to pick two name cards and discuss how the spellings are the same or different. "Yasmin and Miguel's names both have the letter *i*." "They both have *ms*, but Miguel's *M* is big." "They both have six letters." "There are many letters that are in one of the names, but not the other, like *Y, A, S, N, G,* and *U*."

A Community Alphabet 4-28

The names of students in your class, as well as familiar people, places, and objects in the school and neighborhood, can be used to create a relevant and meaningful way for students to connect letters to the real world—a community alphabet.

Materials. Using photographs or drawings, illustrate each letter of the alphabet on a bulletin board area or pocket chart stand. Each of the uppercase and lowercase letters can feature someone or something from your school community. To help everyone feel a part of the community, all students' names should be included in the alphabet, even if it means you have five illustrations for *A*! If you are lacking someone for a particular letter, consider giving a classroom pet a name that starts with the unused letter (Zorba the guinea pig? Quentin the goldfish?). Find a book of baby names (or find lists on websites) and read through them with your students. They will hear the sound repeated many times and you can write down choices on the chalkboard for voting purposes.

Procedures. Use the community alphabet to practice singing the ABC song or to play guessing games. If it is possible to duplicate the alphabet at an $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inch size, make copies for students to keep and refer to at their tables.

Personal Alphabet Books 4-29

Materials. Provide each student with a folder with enough pages for each letter of the alphabet. Old magazines that can be cut up to provide pictures, pictures from concept sorts, photographs, and drawing materials can be used to illustrate the personal alphabet book.

Procedures. Create an Alphabet Scrapbook of pictures and important words to go with each letter of the alphabet. English learners will find this an especially helpful reference as they learn the letters and build their vocabularies in English. Encourage students to write the names of family members, friends, and school personnel in their personal alphabet books. They can illustrate the words with pictures and drawings. Important words that students use in their free writing (*like, I, have, color words, etc.*) should also be included, whenever possible with a key picture. If students are literate in another language, they may want to write a translation of these words in their alphabet book. Students are encouraged to refer to these books throughout the day as needed. See *Words Their Way* (Bear et al., 2004) for additional ideas.

Playing with Letters 4-30

Materials. Manipulatives, such as plastic or wooden letter tiles, magnetic letters, sandpaper letters, and alphabet puzzles.

Procedures. Help students to become familiar with the letters in the English alphabet as they examine, sort, and manipulate letters in a variety of hands-on games and activities. Manipulatives, such as plastic or wooden letter tiles, magnetic letters, sandpaper letters, and alphabet puzzles, can be used by students to match, sort, trace with their fingers, and spell simple words. Each time students handle the letters, their shapes become more familiar. The manipulative activities provide contexts for students and teachers to discuss and describe letter names and sounds, what is “right side up,” and a burgeoning sight-word vocabulary (“Is that a real word?” “Look, it’s my mommy’s name.” “Teacher, I made a word from our word wall.”).

Alphabet puzzles are a good example of what can be done with letter manipulatives. The simplest of puzzles require students to match a letter to its own shape. Often, the puzzle piece itself is shaped like the letter. The puzzle may be practiced over and over, and students are encouraged to say the letter names or sing the alphabet song as they work to put it together. Students can work with a partner to complete the task, thereby encouraging literacy-related conversation (and partners can supply the names of unknown letters). Give students individual puzzle pieces and ask them to find other examples of that letter around the classroom. More complex alphabet puzzles may require students to match an uppercase letter to its lowercase counterpart, or a letter shape to a word that starts with that letter. The repeated practice of identifying each letter and matching it to its picture or letter pair provides English learners with much needed visual support and reinforcement.

Letter Hunts 4-31

Materials. A print-rich classroom or area with charts, labels, signs, and so on for students to look for letters and words; books and magazines with print big enough for students to work with; notetaking paper, writing materials, and highlighter pens.

Procedures. To help students recognize letters and see that they are everywhere, send students on a letter hunt. Have them search for examples of the first letter in their names,

or a letter featured in your shared reading or writing activity. They can look on classroom walls, on labels and packages, and in big books or chart stories. Have students write the letter on a small piece of paper each time they find one, or they can write words they find that contain that letter. Students can also use highlighter markers to spotlight the focus letter in printed materials such as old workbooks or outdated magazines with big print.

Sharing Alphabet Books 4–32

Materials. There is an incredible range of excellent alphabet books on the market that can support your language and literacy teaching for emergent English learners of all ages. ABC books from the simplest wordless books to those using complex content-area vocabulary are described here. Let the artistry of master wordsmiths and illustrators support your English learners' attempts to recognize the English alphabet, build their vocabularies, and engage in meaningful conversations. Please see the reference list of suggested literature featured at the end of this book for additional titles. Alphabet books are coded "ABC" at the end of selected references. Books for specific activities are listed in procedures.

Procedures. Wordless alphabet books and other concept books show rather than tell, and provide a platform for student participation in storytelling activities. For example, *Alphabet City* (Johnson, 1995) features realistic paintings of objects in New York City that resemble letter shapes. *A* is the sideview of a sawhorse, *B* a set of fire escape stairs, and so on. While the book is simple, it is not "babyish." Both young and older emergent learners profit from discussing where in the picture the letter is represented, what object is depicted, what the object does, and what words could be used to describe the pictures. Use this and other wordless books to elicit content-based conversation from your students.

Some alphabet books focus on the sounds that letters make in funny ways. Two examples include *Achoo! Bang! Crash! The Noisy Alphabet* (MacDonald, 2003) and *Talk to Me About the Alphabet* (Raschka, 2003). MacDonald's book provides sounds in nature as well as the sounds of words to narrate a humorous picture for each letter of the alphabet. For instance, the *K* page shows a knight who has been ejected from his horse while walking over a dragon. The text says "Klank! Klang! Klop! Klip! Ka-pow!" (MacDonald, 2003, p. 11). Second-language learners may think that the English language sounds like a bunch of noise, and this book is one way to have fun with that idea! *Talk to Me About the Alphabet* works its way through each letter, incorporating words and sounds the letter represents. Even if students do not understand the meaning of every word, the repetition of sounds provides a connection to learning the written code of English.

Read these alphabet sound books to your students aloud in an energetic and theatrical way. Exaggerate the sounds that are illustrated in the texts. On repeated readings have students echo read the "noisy" lines. Let your students become the chorus of sounds as each page is read. Have students pick their favorite pages and lead the group in chanting the rhythmic and onomatopoeic lines such as "Click! Crackle! Clap! Crunch! Clank! Crash! Crack! Cackle!" (MacDonald, 2003, p. 3).

Many simple alphabet books serve as learning tools that can help build your students' basic vocabulary in English. For example, *Alphathoughts* by poet Lee Bennett Hopkins (2003) simply but eloquently describes a series of common and useful words. The beautiful illustrations help English learners connect the word and poem to an easy-to-understand visual. Read this book over and over, each time clarifying or informally checking that students understand the use of words and their meaning. Ask students to share what they know about individual words or topics.

Other simple definition-type alphabet books focus on specific content areas such as a kind of animal, a job, or a place. *Alphabeep: A Zipping, Zooming ABC* (Pearson, 2003) in-

volves vehicles and road signs that might be seen as you drive. Use a book like this when you want to build vocabulary related to a unit on transportation or the city. Build on the book by learning the names of various kinds of vehicles; cut out pictures of traffic signs and vehicles from magazines; sort these pictures in multiple ways such as by their appearance or function; or have students create their own transportation books. Using content-area alphabet books in thematic units integrates letter-sound awareness within meaningful vocabulary development and conceptual learning.

Alphabet books provide opportunities to create a supportive climate for multicultural and multilingual experiences in the classroom. ABC books such as *Ashley Bryan's ABC of African American Poetry* (Bryan, 1997), *Gathering the Sun: An Alphabet in Spanish and English* (Ada, 1997), and *Handsigns* (Fain, 1995) add to students' understanding of the English alphabet while broadening their knowledge of specific cultures and languages. Guide students to dialogue in class about the many ways in which people express themselves; this often helps them feel more comfortable about sharing their own experiences. As students share their personal background experiences, consider ways to bridge your classroom curriculum to their languages and cultures. Look for the "ABC" code in the children's literature references at the end of this book for additional examples.

Variations. Older emergent English learners will appreciate alphabet books that use humor or more grown-up themes to elucidate the letters. In *Z Goes Home* the letter Z maneuvers through an ABC of obstacles to reach home at the end of the day (Agee, 2003). While using a very simple text line—each letter is represented by only one word—the illustrations and continuity of the story are appealing to students of many ages. It is a fun book for mature students just beginning to develop letter knowledge and vocabulary in English. Another humorous book for students with more advanced English vocabularies is *What Pete Ate from A–Z (Really!)* (Kalman, 2001). The text describes a mischievous dog that eats his way through people's personal items. The bold and silly illustrations are especially engaging to upper-grade students, and lend themselves to extension activities and discussions. Imagine having students create their own alphabet books of "What Pete Ate" as they expand their English vocabularies.

Sorting Alphabet Books 4–33

As your classroom collection and group experiences with alphabet books grow, consider using the books you have shared to conduct open or closed sorts.

Materials. Gather a stack of 8 to 10 alphabet books you have previously shared with your group.

Procedures. Spend a few minutes reminiscing about the storyline, content, or artwork in the books. For open sorts, invite students to think about all of the books, and share ways that the books might be grouped by commonalities. For instance, students might suggest grouping books by the kind of illustrations they use (photographs, collage, drawings, etc.); students may notice letters being displayed in certain styles of fonts; or they may want to classify books by how they were used in your classroom ("We read these ones when we studied about animals."). For closed sorts use a key picture card to represent your category. Invite students to review and discuss which books belong in each group. On one sort, your categories might relate to each book's theme or topic, such as ABC books about animals, school, the community, or a specific habitat.

Another sort might involve sorting books by how much text is presented for each letter: Is the book wordless; does it have single-word descriptions, short phrases, one-sentence, or more complex texts? Still another sort might involve having students sort the alphabet books by their level of sophistication: What age-group audience would

most appreciate each book, and why do they think that? Make up categories that fit your classroom studies and students' interests!

Hands on the Alphabet 4-34

Materials. Begin a collection of magazine pictures or small objects to keep in small containers for each letter of the alphabet. For example, the *A* box may include pictures or mini-versions of an apple, an acorn, an alligator, an armchair, an astronaut, and so on. Many educational supply companies sell these sets ready made. It is also fun to have students contribute to the collection.

Procedures. Work with one or two letters at a time. Use the objects or pictures to teach students the names of words. Mix up two letters worth of items and see if students can correctly sort them into the appropriate container. Give one item each to students and ask them to form themselves into two lines depending on their letter. Students will need to know the name of their item, and remember to attach it to the appropriate letter in order to do that. Always begin with two letters that have very different sounds!

Variations. You can use the pictures or objects to play guessing games. Give one item from a specific letter group to each student to keep hidden. Have the student give clues about what the object is until other students have identified it. You can also play a memory game by laying out all of the objects from a certain letter on a tray. Ask students to close their eyes while you remove one object. Students will need to use their memory and vocabulary skills to identify which object is missing.

Sorting with Alphabet Strips 4-35

Materials. Obtain enough alphabet strips from educational materials stores for each student in your group to have his or her own piece. These can be purchased as rolls of stickers (which can be attached to cardstock) or as individual desktop alphabets with a key illustration for each letter. Photographs as illustrations are especially helpful for English learners who may find some caricatures or drawings difficult to decipher.

Procedures. Desktop alphabet strips are a useful tool to aid in letter recognition and sorting. Use these alphabet strips to have students touch each letter as they say it, or as they sing the alphabet song. Have students "quiz" a partner on the names of letters. Mix up an alphabet set of letter tiles for students to place under the correct letter on the strip. In small-group discussions, encourage students to identify letters and describe their shapes and sizes. Invite students to sing or chant their way through the alphabet to find the names of unknown letters.

Variations. Extend these tasks by giving students small word cards with the names of their fellow students on them, and guide them to put each name below the letter on the alphabet strip according to its first letter. As students learn new sight words, have them demonstrate how the first letter of the word they learned matches a letter on the alphabet strip, and line it up below that letter.

Many Kinds of Alphabets 4-36

Materials. Make copies of some of the sample alphabets from the appendix of this book.

Procedures. Emergent students of all ages will enjoy looking at and comparing the alphabets of many languages. Let students examine the various alphabets, and ask them

to share their perceptions. What does the writing remind them of? How does it compare to English? Can students distinguish the English alphabet from the others? Try to make some letters from other languages by tracing through a thin layer of salt on a shallow tray.

Variations. Discuss key ideas about why people from a variety of cultures have created writing systems. You may want to share portions of books that highlight writing in a variety of languages, such as *Scripts of the World* (Bukiet, 1984), or *Day of Ahmed's Secret* (Parry, 1995). Invite in a classroom parent or community member who can share a different writing system with the students. Show examples of how students' names might be written in this other language. Let this be an opportunity to validate the diversity of written languages in the world, and help students to make connections to background knowledge they bring from their primary languages.

Comparing Picture Books in Different Languages 4-37

Materials. Begin to build a collection of picture books from many languages to share with your students. The most effective of these will be books that have simple text-to-picture matches and clear print. It is also helpful to have bilingual books in which the text is printed in both English and another language. A list of sources for bilingual books is included at the end of this book.

Procedures. Introduce a bilingual book to your students by showing the cover of the book and pointing out how the text looks in both English and the other language. For example, *My First Book of Proverbs = Mi Primer Libro de Dichos* (Gonzalez & Ruiz, 1995) puts the English print and Spanish print in separate banners across the page. Read the text in English, and then point to the words in Spanish. If you are not bilingual in the language presented, do your best to sound out the words, and ask your students to help you say them. If the text uses a script you cannot read, point it out anyway, and ask students who speak the language to make a prediction about what the text might say. Encourage students to share vocabulary words that relate to the picture, which they could teach to the rest of the group. For instance, in *My First Book of Proverbs* one of the pages quotes a Mexican proverb, "Una abeja no hace una colmena" (One bee doesn't make a hive). Students who are learning English, but do not speak Spanish, can be guided to describe the picture and share words in their primary language that relate such as *bee*, *flowers*, and *tree*. Help students understand the moral behind the proverb, and ask how this might be expressed in their home languages.

Variations. If you have bilingual support staff, colleagues, parents, or community members who can share bilingual books with students, build in time for them to come in on a regular basis. Students who have heard a book in their primary language will be able to understand and appreciate the English version much better. If your guest does not speak English, the sharing of a bilingual book can be a team affair! Look for translations of popular children's books from your grade level to include in your classroom library. Students can compare the scripts, make oral language to print connections with their primary language, and pull these books out for bilingual visitors who may be able to read them to individuals informally.

Bilingual Picture Alphabets 4-38

Materials. Make copies of the bilingual picture alphabet for the letters in Spanish and English from the appendix of this book. The same illustration represents each letter in both languages.

Procedures. Bilingual picture alphabets help English learners make connections among their primary oral language, oral English, writing in their primary language, and written English. Bilingual picture alphabets also provide a common vocabulary with which teachers can explain letter–sound correspondences in English by relating these to the language students already know.

Use the Spanish-English picture alphabet to teach vocabulary: “B is for *boat*, or *barco* in Spanish; *boat–barco*, they both start with B.” Let the bilingual alphabet be a scaffold for helping students find letters as they are learning English key words: “Point to *tortuga–tortuga* starts with the letter T.”

Variations. As you learn more about the background languages of your students, begin to collect resource materials to share in class and consider creating bilingual picture alphabets in numerous languages. Some of these resources may already be available from educational publishers or on the Internet (see resource list at the end of this book). These activities build an appreciation and interest in languages and literacies among monolingual-English speakers. Have students share the names of illustrations in their primary languages. Ask students or their parents if the English letters are used in the script of their primary language. Use an affirming manner and open inquisitiveness to discuss commonalities and differences among languages in your multilingual community.

Learning My Letters Game 4–39

Materials. Copy the blank game board from the appendix. Choose four or five letters to focus on, and fill in one letter per space, in random order throughout the board. You will also need the same letters on plastic or wooden tiles, and a cup to draw from.

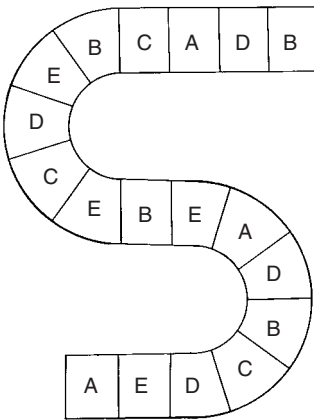


FIGURE 4-7 A Sample “Learning My Letters” Gameboard

Procedures. Use simple games to help students practice the names of letters. Put four or five letter tiles in a small cup—let’s say you picked A, B, C, D, and E. Students take turns picking one letter from the cup and moving to the next spot where that letter appears. Students must say the name of the letter before advancing. The first person to reach the end wins (see Figure 4-7).

Variations. Many variations can be devised for the *Learning My Letters* game. As students become more proficient with recognizing the letters, letter tiles can focus on similar shaped letters such as *c*, *o*, *d*, *b*, and *p*. You can make the game more difficult by having the letter tiles be uppercase versions, and the game board letters lowercase. Or, have students work with the vowels only. As students’ language development progresses, you can ask students to think of a word that starts with the letter before they may advance to each new space. It is always helpful to have a copy of the alphabet or simple picture dictionaries handy when creating more complex variations of this game.

The Winning Letter Game 4–40

Materials. You will need a blank die that you can write letters on for this game. If this is not available, put a small sticker on each side of a numbered die—one letter per side. Each student has a sheet of paper that contains a grid with six rows and five columns. Label each row with the name of one of the letters.

Procedures. Here is a game to build letter recognition and encourage discussion about the alphabet. Choose six letters you want to reinforce with your students. Students take turns rolling the die, coloring in one square on the associated letter row each time. The first person to color in five boxes for the same letter has “The winning letter!”

The Piñata Game 4-41

Materials. You will need two sets of letter tiles, or one set of uppercase and one set of lowercase letters for students to match. The piñata can be a cup or other small container that holds letters.

Procedures. This is a letter-matching game. It is a fast game, just like a race for candy in a real piñata. Students take turns tipping the piñata. When the letters fall to the ground, all students quickly find as many matches as they can, and pair them up in their work space. When all of the letters have been partnered, students share the letter names and see who has the most pairs. Then, put the letter tiles back in the piñata and play again.

Sound Boards 4-42

Materials. Make copies of the sound boards for beginning consonants in English or Spanish from the appendix in this book.

Procedures. Sound boards visually help students connect sounds to a key picture. They are exceptionally helpful in giving students a consistent visual key for the sounds of English letters. Keep these sound boards handy for English learners. Students can have their own copies to paste them to the inside cover of their Personal Readers or writing folders. Review the key word pictures so that students can make an oral language connection to the letter and word.

Variations. Your Spanish-speaking students connect the letters to words in their home language by using the Spanish sound board. Even if you do not speak Spanish, and your students do not have the opportunity to learn to read and write in Spanish, the sound board will facilitate an understanding of the alphabetic principle that smoothes the path to learning letters in English. Encourage your students to point to the consonants and say the name of the associated picture in each box. Chant the sounds along with the word, such as “B-b-b, barco.”

Use the same phonemic awareness games and activities with the Spanish key words as you would with English words. Remember, learning to play with and distinguish individual sounds in words is a skill that transfers across languages!