Miguel was born in the United States and has attended his neighborhood school since kindergarten. He speaks both Spanish and English but has struggled academically. What may account for his persistent underachievement?

Shen-hua was educated in Taiwan but speaks only limited English. Should she be placed in a mainstream class?

Lilli has been in sheltered classes for the past two years and is still performing well below grade level. Should she be referred to special education?

English learners (ELs) like Miguel, Shen-hua, and Lilli constitute the fastest growing part of our school population. It is estimated that more than 10 percent of all K-12 students in the United States are ELs (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2006) and approximately 75 percent of children of immigrants are born in the United States (Capps et al., 2005). English learners continue to be concentrated in California, Florida, Illinois, New York, and Texas, but many other states such as Nebraska, Oregon, and Nevada have experienced an influx of immigrant families. While some of these students from diverse linguistic backgrounds are similar to one another, many are quite different in their levels of English proficiency, academic abilities, and educational backgrounds. In this chapter we
discuss these students and offer a systematic way for assessing their needs and providing an appropriate education for them so that they can experience success in school and beyond.

Some students learning English do well in school, while others experience special challenges (Banks & McGee, 2001; Garcia, 2000; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Graves, Gersten, & Haager, 2004; Maik, 1999; Short & Echevarria, 2004–05). English learners are learning in and through a new language, and find themselves in a cultural environment that may be significantly different from their own. The influence of English-speaking teachers on their culturally diverse students has been well documented, and unfortunately this mismatch of language and culture may contribute to some students’ poor performance in school (Agirdag, 2009; Artiles, Rueda, Salazar, & Higareda, 2002; Gay, 2000; Harry & Klinger, 2005; Harry, Torguson, Katkavich, & Guerrero, 1993; Villegas & Lucas, 2007). Further, some schools have effective parent programs that are inclusive of all families while at other schools only mainstream families are represented. As we better understand these important relationships, educators are giving greater attention to the impact that ethnicity, language, culture, and background have on students’ learning (Au & Blake, 2003; August & Shanahan, 2006; Garibaldi, 1992; MacSwan, 2000).

Clearly, we as educators need to consider each student’s individual situation in order to provide an appropriate education to English learners. Are the students’ parents professionals or migrant workers? Did the students learn English while living in a refugee camp or through a private tutor? Are the students recent immigrants or U.S. born? Do the parents support primary-language instruction or not? Have the students been educated at grade level, or do they have significant gaps in their education? The answers to these questions may impact programming decisions.

**Student Profiles**

While the diverse backgrounds of individuals do not fit neatly into categories, four general profiles emerge:

1. Balanced bilingual
2. Monolingual/literate in native language
3. Monolingual/preliterate in native language
4. Limited bilingual

*Nico* is a tenth-grader who was born in Guatemala. He moved to Southern California in the second grade. Before coming to this country, he was a good student and learned to read and write in Spanish. When he began school in the United States, he was placed in a bilingual classroom where he received some native-language support before transitioning into English instruction. Now in high school, he is performing at or above grade level in mainstream classes. Because Nico can speak, read, and write well in both languages, Nico’s teacher is considering him for the gifted program at his school.

Nico, and students like him, are not the subject of this book, because they have achieved a balanced-bilingual status. Indeed, duplicating his experience is the goal of this book: Helping individuals to become academically successful in English while maintaining their first languages. We have written this book to assist teachers in providing a high-quality education to all students—including those from diverse
backgrounds who are not yet proficient in English, as well as students who have learning challenges.

Students who have not yet achieved balanced-bilingual status are of concern to us (monolingual literate or preliterate in native language or limited bilingual status students). These students require special attention, knowledge, and strategies from teachers to enhance their opportunities to learn and help them succeed in school. Teachers routinely have these students, some of whom experience difficulties in school, in their classes.

Rahul is a recent immigrant who attends middle school. He has grade-level academic ability in his native language but speaks very little English. Because he has lived all his 13 years outside the United States, certain cultural knowledge presents difficulties for him. Rahul is quite shy and does not seek help readily. He has excellent social and academic language skills in his native language and has studied English for a few years, but his proficiency is quite limited. His history of learning and behavior at school, at home, and in the community is positive. He is described as a good citizen and a student who demonstrates appropriate behavior in most settings.

When Agnessa was 6 years old, she was adopted from an orphanage in Russia by an American family. She has an older brother who is the biological child of her parents. Now in third grade, Agnessa has very limited literacy skills. Even her spoken English is quite limited when she interacts with students and the teacher in class. Her family is concerned that Agnessa doesn’t seem to be making sufficient academic progress, and she has had a number of behavior problems in school. She has been caught stealing twice this year, and she is often uncooperative in class.

Born in an urban U.S. city, Luisa is a friendly 15-year-old who sits quietly in class as if she understands everything. When written assignments are given, she writes down the assignment and begins to work. Her writing, however, is illegible, and her spelling is extremely poor. Spanish is her first language, although her family speaks a mix of English and Spanish at home. She writes in English in a knowledge-telling mode without recognizable structure in her sentences or paragraphs. Luisa can converse quite well in both languages, but for some reason has not made academic progress in either language. Although she is popular at school, she is at risk of dropping out because of consistent underachievement.

The purpose of this book is to provide information for teaching English learners with diverse abilities, such as Rahul, Agnessa, and Luisa. Learning a new language while learning in and through that language is a complex endeavor affected by a variety of factors, some of which are shown in Figure 1.1. Effective programs for English learners take a systematic approach in evaluating the needs of these students and then providing the kind of instruction that meets their needs. For all students in our schools to achieve their potential as students and as productive members of our society, high-quality programs are essential.

Because of the tremendous influx of English learners into our schools, the need for programs—and for procedures for placing students in programs—has often outpaced program development. As a result of this uneven growth, terminology varies from state to state and region to region, and the terms used in this book may differ from those used in each school.

High-quality programs include evaluation of ELs in a variety of areas to determine their needs, including native-language knowledge, English language knowledge, school experience and academic background, and learning and behavior patterns (see Figure 1.2). Once an appropriate assessment has been done, instructional plans can be developed to support learners in attaining grade-level standards. Let’s take a look at each aspect of the assessment process.
Native-Language Knowledge

As mentioned, students enter school with varying levels of native-language development. These levels range from low-proficiency to above-grade-level skills in oral language, reading, and writing. We know that students who speak their native languages fluently and have developed age-appropriate literacy skills have increased opportunities for developing language and literacy skills in English (August & Shanahan, 2006; Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Cummins, 1989; Goldenberg, 2008). Further, those who have developed a rich repertoire of knowledge and concept comprehension in their native languages have better opportunities for learning English because their knowledge can be transferred to English (Barratt-Pugh & Rohl, 2001; Cazden, 1992; Krashen, 1982). For example, an individual who understands that the earth rotates around the sun would know that concept regardless of the language the teacher speaks when talking about it.
Those youngsters who have not had solid literacy models in their native languages have more difficulty developing literacy in another language (in this case, English) (Franklin & Thompson, 1994; Howard, Christian, & Genesee, 2003). An assessment to determine the student’s level of native-language proficiency will provide valuable information for making placement and instruction decisions.

**Assessment**

In Agnessa’s case, a home language survey would be given when she enrolled in school to determine her native language, as required by federal law. The result would indicate that her native language is Russian. Next, a competent speaker of Russian would assess Agnessa’s native-language knowledge (Cloud, Genesee & Hamayan, 2009). If native-language professionals are unavailable, personnel from other districts or geographic areas may be hired. Finally, if trained personnel are completely unavailable, community members may be used to ascertain the student’s abilities. When using this option, it should be indicated on the record that the student could not be adequately assessed and that valid, reliable judgments about the language and cognitive abilities of the student could not be made (Baca & Almanza, 1996). This is especially important when the student is being considered for special services, such as special education. Another good resource for school personnel is the student’s family. Since they are able to provide input and insights into the student’s range of skills, including daily living skills (Chang, 1992; Gonzalez et al., 1993).

An assessment of Agnessa’s native-language skills includes measuring oral-language proficiency and reading and writing skills (Hoover & Patton, 2004; Schiff-Myers, Djukic,
Lawler-McGovern, & Perez, 1994). Once Agnessa’s native-language skills have been assessed, results can be compared to grade-level competencies as much as possible (Hoover & Patton, 2004; Perez, 1993; Saville-Troike, 1984). If as a third-grader Agnessa can write a comprehensible 50-word story that is organized and uses a variety of interesting vocabulary words, then the native-language evaluator will list those skills and determine her approximate academic grade level. Agnessa has approximately first-grade level writing and has good comprehension when a story is read to her, but because she is below grade level in literacy in both languages, Agnessa will need more intensive literacy interventions.

**Instruction**

There are a variety of program models for teaching English learners, summarized in Table 1.1. They include sheltered instruction, transitional bilingual education, developmental bilingual education, two-way immersion, English language development, and newcomer programs. While *Lau v. Nichols*, the landmark case that affirmed the rights of ELs to receive an education equal to their English-speaking peers, gave preference to bilingual education for meeting the needs of these students, the law was written broadly enough that its interpretation has led to a number of different programs being implemented for ELs (Aguila, in press; Gandara, Moran, & Garcia, 2004).

Choice of program alternative is influenced by a host of factors, such as the number of students from the language group; the philosophy of the school, district, or state; parent preference; and the availability of necessary resources such as bilingual personnel, trained staff, and leadership (see Dolson & Burnham-Massey, in press, and Genesee, 1999, for a complete discussion of program alternatives).

**TABLE 1.1 Program Options for English Learners**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Options</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sheltered Instruction</td>
<td>Promotes use of techniques and strategies for making grade-level content comprehensible for ELs while promoting their English language development. Although native language may be used for clarification, English is the medium of instruction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transitional Bilingual Education</td>
<td>Teaching in students’ native language provides support as they transition into English instruction, usually within 2–3 years. Sheltered instruction is used during instruction in English to scaffold students’ understanding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developmental Bilingual Education</td>
<td>With the goal of bilingualism and biliteracy, students are taught in two languages for multiple years. Sheltered instruction techniques and strategies assist students’ comprehension in English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two-Way Immersion</td>
<td>English learners and English-speaking students are taught together in two languages. Students communicate in authentic, meaningful ways that promote dual-language development for both groups. Sheltered instruction techniques are utilized when teaching content through the second language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English Language Development</td>
<td>Also commonly referred to as English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction; a separate block of time each day is set aside to focus on specific skills leading to English proficiency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newcomer Programs</td>
<td>The goals of newcomer programs are to acculturate immigrant students with limited English proficiency to U.S. schools, to assist students in acquiring beginning English language skills, and to develop core academic skills and knowledge.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Sheltered Instruction.** The primary goal of sheltered instruction (SI) is to make grade-level academic subject matter comprehensible to English learners, while at the same time developing their English proficiency. Sheltered teachers are certified in content areas (e.g., multiple subjects for elementary level and science, mathematics, history, or literature at the secondary level) and have had training in ways to effectively teach English learners including knowledge of second language acquisition, cultural considerations, and research-based instructional practices for teaching English learners. Such training may take place through preservice or inservice courses.

This type of instructional approach serves as a support until the student is ready for mainstream classes. Sheltered instruction is both an instructional approach and a program option (Echevarria & Short, in press). Some schools offer in their instructional program sections of content classes that are designated as “sheltered” (e.g., sheltered science, sheltered math, sheltered social studies). These classes provide support for English learners until they have developed sufficient English proficiency to be successful in mainstream classes. In other situations, such as in schools that have high numbers of English learners, sheltered instruction is often the instructional approach used by teachers in mainstream classes with all students. In these typically urban settings, most students benefit from an emphasis on language development and providing access to the content, so sheltered teaching is appropriate. Sheltered strategies and techniques are also appropriate in programs such as two-way immersion so that instruction being delivered in students’ second language is made comprehensible.

Sheltered teachers design lessons that use English in a variety of ways, including reading, discussing, and writing about standards-based ideas, processes, and information. This approach integrates natural second-language-acquisition features with principles of effective instruction. Since the emphasis is on meaning, not form, students learning English are able to interact with peers and teachers at their own levels of English language proficiency. Students practice using English while participating in discussions centered around content-area material, thus increasing language acquisition while developing academic concepts. (Chapter 3 discusses specific features of high-quality sheltered instruction.)

**Transitional Bilingual Education.** Also known as early-exit bilingual education, transitional bilingual education (TBE) is the most common form of bilingual education. The focus of TBE is to provide native-language support by teaching literacy and academic content areas using the student’s first language while developing oral proficiency in English. Some nonacademic subjects may be taught in English using sheltered instruction techniques. As students gain proficiency in English, more academic subjects are taught in English, usually beginning with math, then reading and writing, science, and finally social studies. The purpose of TBE is to support ELs in their native languages as they move or transition toward academic instruction taught entirely in English, usually in grade 3.

**Developmental Bilingual Education.** Developmental bilingual education (DBE) is also referred to as late-exit bilingual education and is an enrichment program that focuses on producing bilingual, biliterate students. This is done by teaching ELs in both English and their native languages, emphasizing the cognitive, linguistic, and academic benefits of learning in two languages. When instruction is in English, sheltered instruction is used to make the content comprehensible for ELs. Rather than viewing the native language as simply a bridge to English proficiency, DBE programs capitalize on the students’ linguistic resources and aim to provide the benefits that result from full development of
the students’ native language (Cummins, 1996; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, in press). Students receive bilingual instruction throughout elementary school and through middle and high school when possible.

The most effective model of TBE or DBE is one in which teachers fluent in the students’ native language provide instructional support as needed with beginning speakers requiring more native-language instruction than those with greater English proficiency. Bilingual instructional aides (IAs) are a valuable resource when a certified bilingual teacher is unavailable. In this model, the teacher maintains responsibility for instruction, but works as a team with the IA. The teacher plans lessons, monitors instruction, and develops assessment of student progress; the IA works with a group of students, carrying out lessons in the native language. The IA also documents students’ progress and communicates with the teacher. Since IAs are closely involved with the students’ education, they assist in developing good working relationships with families. In exemplary bilingual programs, parents, educators, and the community value cross-cultural experiences and are actively involved together in school activities and programs as well as the school’s decision-making process.

Two-Way Immersion. Two-way immersion (TWI), also known as two-way bilingual education and dual-language immersion, is unique in that each TWI class is structured so that it is usually composed of 50 percent native English speakers and 50 percent speakers of another language. Academic instruction takes place in both languages so that all students have the opportunity to be both native-language models and second-language learners. The non-English language is used at least 50 percent of the day.

TWI draws on sociocultural theory that asserts that learning occurs through social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978). Students from different language backgrounds communicate in authentic, meaningful ways that promote language development for both groups. The most successful TWI programs recognize the importance of family and community involvement, making sure that the cultures of both groups are valued equally and all parents are involved in decision-making (Howard et al., 2007; Lindholm-Leary & Genesee, in press).

English Language Development. Recent research indicates that exposure to English and interaction with peers and teachers might help promote fluency and communicative competence, but they are not sufficient for native-like English proficiency (Saunders & Goldenberg, in press). There needs to be an intentional effort to make academic language—the cognitively complex language of formal education—understandable for English learners. The importance of developing academic English has become more apparent in recent years, and a separate block of classroom time devoted to ELD has become the norm in regions where there are high numbers of English learners.

Each of the various program models discussed in this section calls for a specific time when attention is given to learning the English language. Teachers trained in second-language acquisition theory and methods provide instruction that focuses on developing oral language, reading, and writing in English so that ELs can participate more fully in classroom instruction. ESL/ELD is most often taught by an ESL specialist and is typically provided on either a pull-out basis or as a scheduled time for one or more periods during the day. ELD or ESL standards can provide a framework for this type of high-level language development (McKay, 2000).

Currently, there is an increased awareness of the importance of integrating academic content areas with language instruction. Rather than introducing a series of isolated units, language instruction is most effective if it teaches language that provides access to subject matter texts, discussions, and class activities (Crandall, 1995; Short, 1991).
**Newcomer Programs.** Newcomer programs are designed typically for middle and high school immigrant students who have limited English proficiency, although there may be such programs at the elementary level as well. The goals of newcomer programs are to acculturate students to life in the United States, to assist students in acquiring beginning English language skills, and to develop core academic skills and knowledge. Many newcomers have limited literacy skills in their native languages, often due to limited formal schooling. There is wide variation in how newcomer programs are implemented (Short & Boyson, 2004). Some are programs within a school so that when students exit the program they remain at the same school while others are at designated school sites or at district intake centers. Most programs include families in the school by offering adult ESL classes, arranging family events, and assisting families in accessing community health and social resources.

In summary, for students learning in bilingual settings, the steps for instruction are

1. Assess native-language proficiency.
2. Design and implement an instructional plan that includes ESL/ELD, native-language support, and sheltered instruction, as appropriate.
3. Conduct ongoing, informal assessment to determine the student’s progress in language, academic, and content acquisition (Cloud, 1994; Genesee et al., 2006; Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991).

**English-Language Knowledge**

English proficiency is the greatest predictor of school success. When insufficient time and attention is devoted to the systematic development of English, the consequences are grave. Inadequately developed English skills are associated with lower GPAs, repeated grades, lower performance on standardized tests of academic content knowledge and low graduation rates (Abedi & Lord, 2001; August & Shanahan, 2006; Ruiz-de-Velasco & Fix, 2000).

As important as English proficiency is, we need to be cautious in attempting to “force” accelerated proficiency on students. Second language development is a process, much like learning one’s first language. We would not expect a 3-year-old to have completely developed language anymore than we should expect a student with three years of exposure to English to be fluent and performing at grade-level in English. Accountability measures may pressure school administrators and teachers to have unrealistic expectations of students, who themselves may be feeling pressure to learn English.

For any new language, several possible levels of knowledge exist. Making a distinction between everyday conversational ability and the academic proficiency required for scholastic success was made popular by Jim Cummins (1981, 1989, 1994, 2003). The conversational proficiency needed in everyday situations is termed basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), while the more cognitively demanding language necessary for school success is called cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP). Although the terms BICS and CALP are still widely used, Cummins has more recently used the terms conversational language and academic language (Cummins, 2003).

Conversational proficiency is relatively easy to acquire. In fact, a person can learn and understand basic words and phrases in a matter of hours, with fluency usually attained in one to three years. In Cummins’s conceptualization of bilingual proficiency, conversational proficiency is just “the tip of the iceberg”; below the surface lies the more critical language proficiency required for academic tasks.
The language of school is more complex and more cognitively demanding than everyday language. It is the kind of language needed for comprehension of text, as well as for analysis and synthesis of material. If a student speaks little or no English, then the acquisition of new concepts will be expedited when presented in the language the student understands—his or her native language.

Content area instruction, which relies on academic language proficiency, demands more from the student than simple understanding of spoken English. It requires that the student have a good command of the domains of language, such as English phonology (sounds), morphology (basic units of meaning), syntax (grammar), semantics (meaning), and pragmatics (function) across content areas and in each language skill area (see Figure 1.3). Students must understand English syntactic patterns and rules when they read, write, speak, and listen to English. But these skills alone are not sufficient, since each subject area uses a language of its own; for instance, the language of mathematics is different from those of literature and science. Each academic content area has its own standards and associated vocabulary terms. These standards and vocabulary terms are pure academic language—not the kind of words that students will encounter in everyday experiences. The language of each content area is usually decontextualized and can be particularly challenging for English learners. The following vocabulary terms demonstrate the high level of language each content area requires. Notice that words can have one meaning in everyday language and a different meaning in a subject area:

- **English-Language Arts**: homographs, characteristics of nonfiction, citations, text features, conjunctions, logical fallacies
- **Mathematics**: divisibility, histogram, front-end estimation, unit conversion, variability, expanded notation
- **Social Studies**: conflict, colonization, interpret, relief map, longitude, plateau
- **Science**: magnetism, attraction, consumers, investigation, prediction, igneous rock, bar graph

![Figure 1.3](image.png)
With each succeeding grade level, the ability to learn content material becomes increasingly dependent on interaction with and mastery of the language that is connected to the specific content material. The ability to demonstrate knowledge also requires increasingly sophisticated oral and written forms of language. McKeon (1994) suggests that “careful planning of instruction is needed to help students develop the decontextualized language skills they will need to master the cognitively demanding content in higher grades” (p. 25).

Cummins’s conceptualization of language proficiency is not without its critics (Edelsky, 1991; Rivera, 1984; Romaine, 1989; Troike, 1984). Baker (1993) characterizes the limitations of the BICS/CALP distinction as an oversimplification of the reality of how complex and multifaceted language and language competence is. In fact, research indicates that a bilingual student’s language competencies are influenced by a number of factors, such as environment and motivation, and are constantly evolving and interacting; they are not simple dichotomies that are easily compartmentalized and unchanging. Further, the notion of distinct levels of language proficiency lacks empirical support.

In spite of its limitations, the notion of everyday language versus academic language (the BICS/CALP distinction) enjoys wide popularity among practitioners, primarily because of its applicability to students in classroom situations. It provides a general understanding of students’ language needs. Even students who appear to have a good command of spoken English may have difficulty with academic instruction in English.

It is possible to apply the BICS/CALP iceberg analogy to the case of Luisa, who is a limited-bilingual student. Because she has lived all her life in the United States, teachers are concerned about her low academic levels in English. Records show that initial assessment results of social and academic language skills in Spanish (done in kindergarten) indicate high levels of social language skills and low preliteracy levels (that is, the ability to recognize rhyming words, sound/symbol relationships, and so forth). Although she was in a bilingual kindergarten, the teacher was not a fluent Spanish speaker. Luisa began first grade with a native-Spanish-speaking teacher, but after her family moved, she was placed in an all-English first-grade class at the new school. In second grade, she received limited native-language support from a bilingual paraeducator, but no such assistance was available in third grade and beyond. Report cards and teacher comments reveal that Luisa has performed poorly in school since kindergarten. She is a popular student, has many friends, and has been quite cooperative in school, which may account for her promotion from grade to grade. Now in high school, Luisa has low academic skills in both English and Spanish.

The iceberg analogy (see Figure 1.4) suggests the following linguistic profile: Luisa has surface features in Spanish and surface features in English, as well. However, she does not fare as well in terms of the more cognitively demanding underlying proficiency. During the critical early developmental period, Luisa did not receive solid, consistent instruction in either language, which restricted her learning. Her conversational proficiency in English does not guarantee academic proficiency.

The iceberg analogy provides a simple but useful profile for teachers. Of course, a more in-depth assessment of levels of language proficiency is essential if students are to be placed in the proper academic program.
The assessment process for English learners ideally begins with a home language survey. The home language survey needs to be in the language spoken by the family. It is completed by the parents and is designed to provide information about use of language in family settings and outside of school. If the survey reveals that English is not a student’s home language, a native language proficiency evaluation is the next step. In addition, English proficiency is typically assessed by school personnel who are familiar with second-language acquisition and assessment tools in the area using an instrument such as the Language Assessment Scales (LAS), California English Language Development Test (CELDT), or Idea Proficiency Test (IPT) in English. An assessment should also include informal assessment of oral language, reading, and writing. Informal assessment may be conducted through observation scales, informal writing samples, and informal reading inventories. Typically, a student who is learning English is assigned a proficiency level for purposes of placement. It is far too simplistic to conclude that all students learning English pass through the same stages of learning and through every level of language development in the same way. However, levels of development are commonly referred to in placing English learners in instructional programs. Informal observation scales, such as the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM) (see Figure 1.5), include levels on which comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar are considered. For example, an English learner who is just entering school or is a newcomer to the United States is likely to be at Level 1 or 2, typically speaking very little English and having limited conversational and academic skills. By the time students have progressed to Levels 4 and 5, they are approaching fluency in conversational English. The purpose of assessment and approximate estimates of English proficiency is to provide appropriate instruction.
### FIGURE 1.5 SOLOM Language Observation Matrix

**Teacher Observation**

**Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL</th>
<th>(A) Comprehension</th>
<th>(B) Fluency</th>
<th>(C) Vocabulary</th>
<th>(D) Pronunciation</th>
<th>(E) Grammar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Cannot understand even simple conversation.</td>
<td>Speech is so halting and fragmentary as to make conversation virtually impossible.</td>
<td>Vocabulary limitations so extreme as to make conversation virtually impossible.</td>
<td>Pronunciation problems so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.</td>
<td>Errors in grammar and word order so severe as to make speech virtually unintelligible.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Has great difficulty following what is said. Can comprehend only &quot;social conversation&quot; spoken slowly and with frequent repetitions.</td>
<td>Usually hesitant; often forced into silence by language limitations.</td>
<td>Misuse of words and very limited vocabulary make comprehension quite difficult.</td>
<td>Very hard to understand because of pronunciation problems. Must frequently repeat in order to make him/herself understood.</td>
<td>Grammar and word order errors make comprehension difficult. Must often rephrase and/or restrict him/herself to basic patterns.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Understands most of what is said at slower than normal speed with repetitions.</td>
<td>Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussions is frequently disrupted by the student's search for the correct manner of expression.</td>
<td>Frequently uses the wrong words; conversation somewhat limited because of inadequate vocabulary.</td>
<td>Pronunciation problems necessitate concentration on the part of the listener and occasionally lead to misunderstanding.</td>
<td>Makes frequent errors of grammar and word order that occasionally obscure meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Understands nearly everything at normal speed, although occasional repetition may be necessary.</td>
<td>Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussion is generally fluent, with occasional lapses while searching for the correct manner of expression.</td>
<td>Occasionally uses inappropriate terms and/or must rephrase ideas because of lexical inadequacies.</td>
<td>Always intelligible although one is conscious of a definite accent and occasional inappropriate intonation patterns.</td>
<td>Occasionally makes grammatical and/or word order errors that do not obscure meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Understands everyday conversation and normal classroom discussions without difficulty.</td>
<td>Speech in everyday conversation and classroom discussion is fluent and effortless, approximating that of a native speaker.</td>
<td>Use of vocabulary and idioms approximates that of a native speaker.</td>
<td>Pronunciation and intonation approximates that of a native speaker.</td>
<td>Grammatical usage and word order approximates that of a native speaker.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The student oral language observation matrix (SOLOM) has five (5) categories on the left: A. Comprehension, B. Fluency, C. Vocabulary, D. Pronunciation, and E. Grammar. It also has five numbers along the top, one (1) being the lowest mark to five (5) being the highest mark. According to your observation, indicate with an (X) across the square in each category that best describes the child's abilities. Those students whose checkmarks (X's) are to the right of the darkened line will be considered for reclassification, if test scores and achievement data also indicate English proficiency.
Bias in assessment instruments and in the interpretation of results when English learners are tested has been frequently reported (Artiles et al., 2002). Assessment of English learners in English requires consideration of potential bias related to several areas. First, the comfort level of the student can impact performance on the test. Second, the amount of time that might be required to obtain accurate information may need to be adjusted. Finally, students may have a variety of experiences in home culture that may or may not prepare them for the logic or reasoning required in comprehension questions on a test. Home language proficiency should be compared to English language proficiency and the former should be a central element when assessing learning potential (Baca & Cervantes, 2004).

**Instruction**

Research suggests that English learners benefit from a separate block of time for English language development (ELD) or ESL. In schools with relatively small numbers of ELs, this can be managed by the ESL teacher. However, in many urban schools where the numbers of ELs comprise a large percent of the students, regular classroom teachers provide ELD instruction, sometimes team teaching with the ESL teacher. In their review of research on effective ELD instruction, Dolson and Burnham-Massey (in press) suggest that it consists of learning contexts that:

- Are organized according to recognized developmental criteria such as ELD standards (Dutro & Kinsella, in press; Snow & Katz, in press).
- Are appropriate to the age, grade, and English proficiency level of students (Genesee & Riches, 2006; Saunders & O’Brien, 2006).
- Include ample opportunities for English learners to engage in interactive, student-to-student conversations employing the targeted language (Saunders & Goldberg, 1999).
- Have regularly scheduled ELD instruction based on a common curriculum (Saunders, Foorman, & Carlson, 2006).
- Offer instruction provided by highly qualified staff (Kane, Rockoff, & Staiger, 2007).
- Are supported by assessments administered periodically to determine student progress and inform instruction (Dutro & Kinsella, in press; Snow & Katz, in press).

The separate block of time for ELD/ESL is not the only part of the school day in which students learn and acquire English. In fact, a substantial amount of progress in English can be attributed to participation in sheltered content instruction (Echevarria & Short, in press), because well-designed lessons in content areas (social studies, math, science, language arts) provide opportunities to expand academic language skills.

As Figure 1.5 illustrates, instructional programs for language development are often based on some variation of the natural approach (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), which assumes that students acquire a second language in stages, in much the same way that they acquire a first language. According to the natural approach, students have more receptive ability than expressive ability during the early stages of language learning. These programs therefore attempt to create a nonthreatening and motivating language-learning environment. States vary in their terminology but all essentially follow a process like that shown in Figure 1.6.

Once the student’s English language level is determined by formal assessment (using a standardized test such as the LAS, CELDT, or IPT) or by informal assessment (through observation, the use of SOLOM, informal writing samples, or informal reading inventories), this information can be combined with the results of native-language
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Teaching English Learners with Diverse Abilities

knowledge and skills assessment findings. A comprehensive plan for instruction can then be developed based on the profile of the student. Figure 1.7 outlines program options for English learners based on their levels of English proficiency. For example, a student at Levels 1 or 2 on the SOLOM needs extensive focus on listening and speaking English during instruction. Students at Level 3 and higher are able to participate more fully in instruction that includes reading and writing English in the content areas, which is an essential part of advanced English language development and academic learning (see Jill Kemper Mora’s award-winning website for more details on levels of English proficiency and matching instruction accordingly at http://coe.sdsu.edu/people/jmora/).

It is important to note that the model presented assumes the availability of qualified bilingual personnel to provide native-language support particularly for students at English proficiency Levels 1 and 2. In many areas nationwide, this is not the case and students at beginning levels of English are in sheltered content classes. This is especially prevalent at the secondary level and in locations where there are only a small number of students from one language group.

Students learning English receive ESL instruction until they reach fluent English proficiency and are re-designated for enrollment in an all-mainstream program. Ideally, the amount of native-language support and the number of sheltered subject areas and

FIGURE 1.6 Stages of Language Acquisition (Modified from CELDT Assistance Packet, 2008)

Beginning: At this stage, students are new learners and may demonstrate little or no receptive or productive English skills. Often referred to as the “silent stage,” students are beginning to understand a few concrete details during unmodified instruction. Their receptive language is better than expressive so they may be able to respond to some communication and learning demands, but with many errors. Oral and written production is usually limited to disconnected words and memorized statements and questions. Frequent errors make communication difficult.

Early Intermediate: Students performing at this level continue to develop receptive and productive English skills, although receptive skills outperform production. They are able to identify and understand more concrete details during unmodified instruction. It is important the students at this stage are introduced to appropriate amounts of academic language. They may be able to respond with increasing ease to more varied communication and learning demands with a reduced number of errors. Oral and written production is usually limited to phrases and memorized statements and questions. Frequent errors still reduce communication.

Intermediate: Students performing at this level begin to tailor their English language skills to participate in classroom activities and meet communication and learning demands with increasing accuracy. They have developed more social than academic language but are able to identify and understand more concrete details and some major abstract concepts during unmodified instruction. They are able to respond with increasing ease to more varied communication and learning demands with a reduced number of errors. Oral and written production has usually expanded to sentences, paragraphs, and original statements and questions. Errors still complicate communication.

Early Advanced: Students possess a vocabulary and grammar approaching that of their English-speaking peers. They begin to combine the elements of the English language in complex, cognitively demanding situations and are able to use English as a means for learning in the content areas. They are able to identify and summarize most concrete details and abstract concepts during unmodified instruction in most content areas. Oral and written production is characterized by more elaborate discourse and fully developed paragraphs and compositions. Errors are less frequent and rarely complicate communication.

Advanced: Students performing at this level communicate effectively with various audiences in a wide range of familiar and new topics to meet social and learning demands. For students at this level to attain the English proficiency of their native English-speaking peers, further linguistic enhancement and refinement are still necessary. Students at this level are able to identify and summarize concrete details and abstract concepts during unmodified instruction in all content areas. Oral and written production reflects discourse appropriate for content areas. Errors are infrequent and do not reduce communication.
## FIGURE 1.7 Examples of Subjects and Language Instruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Proficiency Levels</th>
<th>District’s Core Curriculum for English Learners</th>
<th>Self-Image Cross-cultural LEP 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fluent English Proficient</td>
<td>All Subjects</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Beginning (non-English) SOLOM 5</td>
<td>ESL–1, Language Arts, Math, Social Science, Science**</td>
<td>Art, Music, PE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Intermediate SOLOM 12–16</td>
<td>ESL–3, Language Arts, Social Science</td>
<td>Math, Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Early Advanced SOLOM 17–20</td>
<td>ESL–4, Language Arts</td>
<td>Transitional Language Arts, Social Science**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Advanced SOLOM 21–25</td>
<td>ESL–Advanced*</td>
<td>Language Arts or other subject for enrichment Optimal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*May be provided within the transitional or mainstream language arts curriculum with qualified staff, proper planning, material, and training.

**And career/vocational education (applied academics), especially grades 7–12.

*Source: Adapted from Paramount Unified School District Framework.*
mainstream classes vary with each level of English proficiency. Each individual student is likely to learn English in a unique pattern of development (Garcia, 2000).

**Beginning Level (Non–English Speaking).** Students receive as much native-language support as needed in the academic areas. Content-based ESL instruction focuses on developing English while providing the link between the content areas and their associated English vocabulary, oral and written language functions, and structures. Time spent developing skills and knowledge in the native language will theoretically provide a foundation for later learning in English. The amount of time a student will be in a particular stage varies across individuals. Students begin to develop rudimentary literacy skills during these early stages of language learning.

**Early Intermediate Level.** Students at this level of English proficiency are still making sense of the new language.

Agnessa, the Russian student who has exhibited some inappropriate behaviors, is at this level of proficiency. Agnessa and students like her receive academic development in their native language as needed for context-reduced areas such as language arts, reading, math and science concepts, and social science. Sheltered instruction is used in subjects where context clues facilitate understanding such as math computation, problem solving, and science labs. They will have increased opportunities for interaction if integrated into classes with fluent English speakers in art, music, and physical education.

**Intermediate Level.** Students at this level are ready for increased English language development, including more sheltered instruction for academic subjects taught in English.

Rahul, the recent immigrant who has grade-level academics in his native language, is at the intermediate stage. Students like Rahul are able to speak in longer phrases and complete sentences, although they may become frustrated by not being able to express completely and correctly what they know. For instance, when talking about a familiar topic, such as food or family, Rahul’s English may be at an advanced level. Yet in the same hour, when talking about a recent field trip to the Museum of Natural History, Rahul’s English may resemble beginning levels because of the sophistication of language.

Language arts and the social sciences continue to be taught using native-language support as needed. Social science is heavily dependent on language; terms and concepts used are culturally laden, and lessons often draw on a bank of knowledge that may be unfamiliar to English learners.

**Early Advanced Level.** Students at this level are developing increased academic skills, depending on age and level of literacy in their native languages. They are often mistakenly thought to be ready for all mainstream classes, since their ability to speak and understand English is quite good. However, their ability to understand and complete academic tasks in English may lag behind, especially if they do not have grade-level academic skills in their native language. Therefore, native-language support in language arts continues, providing a strong foundation in literacy, which is necessary for academic success. Sheltered language arts programs are introduced as students begin preparing to transition to the next level.

**Advanced Level.** For students at this level, instruction focuses on refining and developing advanced uses of academic English. They are able to participate fully in class discussions; however, it is not uncommon for students to have significant gaps in their academic ability (as was the case with Luisa). Such students need significant intervention,
such as specific learning strategies (see Chapter 5), intensive small-group or individualized instruction, or some other interventions. (See the section titled Learning and Behavior Challenges later in this chapter.)

**Academic Background and School Experience**

The number of years students have spent in school, the quality of their instructional experiences, and the consistency of those experiences are important data. A student like Rahul, who is monolingual/literate in his native language and who has grade-level school experience and an uninterrupted academic background, requires a different academic focus than a student of the same age who has limited literacy skills. For example, the amount of native-language support is based on student need. Students who are developing basic academic skills will require extra time devoted to literacy and will benefit from native-language support (Gutierrez, 2001).

The importance of academic background and school experience increases exponentially with the age of the student. If, like Rahul, a youngster first enters U.S. schools in middle school, prior experience is a critical factor. But for a child enrolling in preschool, prior academic experience is much less relevant. For many ELs, especially those in upper elementary and secondary grades, lack of school experience affects academic development and English language proficiency. These factors will be considered when deciding on an instructional program.

Accurate information about previous school experience, although often difficult to obtain, greatly helps in instructional planning. When records are unavailable, it is essential to speak with parents, guardians, and the students themselves. Behavior and learning patterns that appear inappropriate may be due to a lack of school experience. Immigrant students need to be given ample opportunity to adjust to their new setting and to learn school procedures. In order to ease the transition, educators need to be sensitive to the situation and be willing to make modifications and adaptations as needed.

**Assessment**

Assessment is critical in all areas of instruction and not just to determine levels of English proficiency. Particularly for students with diverse abilities, assessment in basic skill development and content area knowledge is essential to provide students with instruction that is appropriate, supportive, and nondiscriminatory (Figueroa & Newsome, 2006). For example, Rahul’s eighth-grade science teacher may discover that he has not acquired certain skills that are emphasized in U.S. schools, such as outlining, specific study skills, or report writing. The teacher can teach those skills to the class at the beginning of the year and review these skills as they are used in lessons. (Students who already have these skills would be assigned other tasks.)

If students have already been labeled with disabilities, assessments would be conducted in the context of the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) and ideally would provide the vital information necessary to provide differentiated instruction at appropriate levels (Haager, Klinger, & Vaughn, 2007). If students are not labeled but are struggling with academic success, ongoing assessment in the form of curriculum-based measures will provide teachers with consistent information across time, and teachers will use the data to provide differentiated instruction at appropriate levels. Measures such as informal reading inventories, writing probes with grading rubrics, and other resources such as
timed tests in oral reading fluency may assist teachers in determining students' level of literacy development (Graves, Plasiencia-Peinado, Deno, & Johnson, 2005).

**Instruction**

Students with grade-level academic skills in their native languages may move into sheltered classes more quickly than those who lack strong academic preparation. Initially, bilingual support, if available, would ease the transition as would specific ESL instruction. Sheltered classes that offer sufficient scaffolding, comprehensible input, and contextual support assist students in making steady progress toward attaining standards (see Chapter 3 for a detailed description of sheltered instruction).

Those students with gaps in their education and who lack strong literacy skills will require much more explicit instruction in the routines and expectations of school as well as procedural, organizational, and academic strategies to enhance academic performance. Often, it is assumed that students understand these aspects of schooling when in fact they must be taught (Chapter 5 includes information on strategy instruction in these areas). Further, instruction needs to be highly contextualized, providing students with opportunities to interact with one another and practice the skills and knowledge presented in lessons.

**Learning and Behavior Challenges**

Over the past decade there has been a growing concern about the overrepresentation and underrepresentation of minority students in special education classes, especially those who are learning English in school (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Echevarria, Powers, & Elliott, 2004; Jiménez, 2000; Ruiz, 1995). Once labeled as having a disability, students often spend their entire school careers in special education. Carrying the label has a negative impact on social relationships and self-concept (Hallahan & Kauffman, 2004; Pavri & Monda-Amaya, 2001) and long-term outcomes such as graduation and employment (Blackorby & Wagner, 1996). In fact, some advocates for ELs have questioned the quality and appropriateness of special education services for these students (Figueroa, 1989; MacSwan, 2000; Schiff-Myers et al., 1994). Awareness of the controversy around minority students in special education as well as a lack of understanding of cultural and language issues has lead some educators to be overly cautious in referring ELs for assessment, resulting in an underrepresentation of some ethnic groups. Students learning English risk receiving no special services or assistance at all. Trends indicate that ELs are less likely than other students to receive special services (Cline & Fredrickson, 1999; Jiménez, 2000).

Disproportionate representation of minority students in special education is most striking among the mild and moderate disability categories. Categories such as learning disabilities, emotional-behavioral disorders, speech and language disorders, and mild mental retardation require subjective judgment because these disabilities do not have a clear biological cause and are less identifiable than other disabilities like blindness or Down syndrome. Some argue that the mild disabilities themselves are socially constructed and arbitrary (Barnes, Mercer, & Shakespeare, 1999), leading to extreme variability in identification rates. A number of experts suggest that overrepresentation is best thought of as an indicator of underlying issues that should be addressed rather than focusing on the fact of overrepresentation itself (Artiles, Trent, & Palmer, 2004; Rueda &
Windmueller, 2006). High-quality, effective instruction for all students in both general and special education could diminish the significance of overrepresentation.

Given that the estimates of learning disabilities is approximately 15 percent of the school population (National Center for Learning Disabilities, 2006), it is reasonable to assume those estimates would be the same for English learners.

Traditional practices with struggling students have been criticized for waiting for the child to fail and then focusing on determining eligibility for special education services. An alternative approach, response to intervention, or RTI, emphasizes catching the problem early, providing interventions, documenting the student’s response to the interventions and then making data-based decisions about the necessity of more intensive interventions, including special education.

**Search for Interventions: A Three-Tiered Model**

As seen in Figure 1.8, the first consideration is the quality of instruction in regular education (Batsche et al., 2005; Brown & Doolittle, 2008; Echevarria & Hasbrouck, 2009; Fuchs, Fuchs, & Vaughn, 2008). If a student is struggling, then the instructional context is assessed to make sure that the student’s needs are being met within that classroom. For ELs in particular, it is important to first look at the appropriateness of the instructional program since the educational system is often insensitive to the issues and stresses surrounding learning English, creating what may mistakenly be viewed as behavioral or learning disabilities (Artiles, Harry, Reschly, & Chinn, 1999; Baca & Cervantes, 2004).
Teachers may not use strategies known to be effective with ELs (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008; Richards & Leafstadt, 2010).

Although students experience difficulties in school for a number of reasons, sometimes the problems are related to language or learning disabilities. Some common characteristics of students with learning or behavior problems are the following:

- Withdrawn behavior
- Memory difficulty
- Bizarre behavior
- Poor motor abilities
- Aggressive behavior
- Poor perceptual abilities
- Attention problems
- Poor language abilities
- Hyperactivity
- Poor academic performance
- Low motivation

General educators and special educators share responsibilities for all children, including those with disabilities. The key for struggling students is to provide more effective instruction and strong interventions.

**Tier 1**

As mentioned previously, when behavior or learning challenges appear, classroom instruction is evaluated for a match with learner needs; scientifically based instruction/interventions are implemented to help the student within the regular class setting. Individual interventions require consistency and sustained periods of time to facilitate student change. But students who are learning English often experience learning and behavior difficulties that are more associated with the strain of adapting to a new culture and learning a new language than with some type of disability. In the case of Luisa (limited bilingual), who was born in the United States and began school as a Spanish speaker, inconsistent language instruction at critical developmental stages likely contributed to her current poor performance. High transiency rates, the mismatch between school expectations and those of the student’s family, insufficient academic background, low English proficiency, inadequate instruction, lack of continuity between instructional programs and myriad other reasons may account for the difficulties experienced by ELs. However, Luisa and students like her are at risk for referral to special education because low skills at her advanced age are often assumed to be the result of a learning disability.

What if a student like Agnessa (monolingual/preliterate) was experiencing difficulties? Assessment results in Russian indicate excellent social language proficiency and weak academic language. She is at English Level 2 on the SOLOM, although her lack of academic background contributes to the difficulties she is experiencing. In addition, she is a verbal individual (in Russian) who is unable to communicate effectively with peers in English, perhaps accounting for some of her misbehavior. A certain amount of learning and behavior problems can be expected as part of the normal process of making the significant adjustments required of English learners. In Agnessa’s case, the teacher is giving her positive recognition by assigning leadership roles and responsibilities in class, reducing Agnessa’s inappropriate behaviors.
So, in examining the regular class setting, the following interventions are among the supports to offer.

- Focus on the strengths of the student. Adapt assignments and tasks so that the student can use his or her strengths and experience success.
- Determine that the core instructional program uses research-based curricula that are appropriate for ELs.
- Plan specifically around the linguistic characteristics of the learner.
- Identify what the student can and cannot do academically and linguistically based on assessment data. Start teaching at the appropriate level and with techniques that are known to be effective for students who are learning English so that the student can experience success.
- Confer with parents regularly to gain their support and involve the parents in the teaching and learning process.
- Use interactive, engaging approaches to teaching, such as partner sharing, cooperative learning, and cross-age tutoring.
- Provide emotional security for the student by building a positive supportive relationship while maintaining high expectations. This could include providing both native-language support and community support, showing a genuine interest in the life of the student.
- Encourage goal setting and consistent measurement of academic progress with mechanisms for self-report and regular reports to parents.
- Make directions clear and simple and adjust workload and time requirements as necessary.
- Model processes and strategies since many ELs are not familiar with ways to organize and process information.
- Plan specific written agreements with students that clarify expectations and emphasize self-regulated learning.

Tier 2

Students in a high-quality instructional program who lag behind other students on measures of performance are identified as those who need further intervention at Tier 2. This group should constitute less than 20 percent of the students in general education. Typically, classroom interventions will benefit the student, reducing the learning or behavior difficulties the student was experiencing (Batsche et al., 2005; Cloud, 1994; Richards & Leafstadt, 2010). However, when students display poor response to high-quality classroom instruction, a school-based problem-solving team decides on supplemental instruction (Baca & Cervantes, 2004; Cline & Frederickson, 1999; Lozano-Rodriguez & Castellano, 1999). The team is typically comprised of classroom teachers, including those familiar with second-language acquisition and instruction for ELs; a school counselor; and an administrator. Problem-solving teams (also known by names such as teacher support teams, multidisciplinary teams, instructional support teams, or child study teams) have resulted in decreased referrals and placement in special education (Hartman & Faye, 1996) and decreased overrepresentation of minorities in special education (Gravois & Rosenfield, 2006). The team defines the problem, determines why it is happening, develops a plan, and evaluates the plan. Areas to examine for informing development of a plan may include the student's home and family situation, school program and language of instruction, levels of native language functioning, English proficiency, attendance patterns, and health issues. By checking records or interviewing the family, the team may discover that the student's academic problems are caused by poor vision or hearing, preoccupation over difficulties at home, or an instructional program
that does not meet his or her needs. To ensure appropriate evaluation of the whole child, the following procedural steps are recommended for ELs when learning or behavioral issues are a challenge (Ortiz & Wilkinson, 1991; Schiff-Myers, et al., 1994).

- Talk to parents and learn as much about the student in both community and school activities as possible, including information previously discussed in this chapter: native-language competence, English language competence, and prior school experience.
- Document progress, or lack thereof, for all interventions implemented. Data-based decisions will be made from records of how the student responded to interventions.
- Ensure that the student who is learning English has teachers who are trained specifically to work with ELs, having professional preparation in second-language acquisition, culture, ESL, and effective sheltered instruction.
- Ensure that the curriculum and the interventions that the teacher uses are those known to be effective for English learners.
- Have various school personnel (including several different teachers) document the student’s responsiveness to teaching, including when accommodations and adaptations were made over a sustained period of time.
- Create a home and educational record of the student’s accomplishments and challenges.
- Finally, if the student does not respond to intensive interventions, he or she may require more intensive support, such as that provided in Tier 3.

**Tier 3**

Approximately 5 percent of students will require the kind of intensive interventions offered through Title 1, district remediation programs, or special education (Batsche et al., 2005). These interventions are typically long term and may include a formal referral for assessment to determine eligibility for special education. In the RTI model, eligibility is determined by examining the data that have been collected through the use of RTI practices in Tiers 1 and 2. More extensive evaluation may be needed to determine eligibility, depending upon the referral questions and developing interventions that will be effective in improving a student’s rate of learning. Additional data may include use of formal and informal assessments (curriculum based), observations, and interviews.

**Instruction**

The same three-tier model can be applied when considering instruction. For English learners with diverse abilities the Response-to-Intervention (RTI) model is required as part of the identification model for special education (IDEIA, 2004). Utilizing this model is intended to curtail discriminatory labeling and inappropriate placement of students into disability categories (Klingner, Artilles, & Barletta, 2006). Most RTI models involve implementing the strongest Tier 1 interventions possible (Echevarria & Hasbrouck, 2009; McIntosh, Graves, & Gersten, 2007).

For example, Tier 1 is the instruction delivered by the general education teacher. This instruction involves all we have discussed heretofore including determining English proficiency, level of learning across subjects, and levels of literacy. Tier 1 teachers would engage in best practices to maximize learning progress for English learners. Students who are struggling might be recommended for Tier 2 instruction.

Tier 2 instruction involves small group instruction to provide intensive practice at the student’s level of the learning. The goal of interventions is matched to the challenges the student is experiencing such as developing literacy, English proficiency,
content area learning (e.g., mathematics), or increasing appropriate behavior. Small-group instruction typically involves students in fairly homogeneous groups from three to eight students (Linan-Thompson, Cirino, & Vaughn, 2008). If students make adequate progress, as measured by specified assessments, they might not need to continue in Tier 2. Tier 2 is offered in addition to Tier 1 and is ideally offered for at least an hour per day at a time in which students miss as little as possible from the regular schedule. Parents can be actively involved in Tier 2 by helping students practice skills they are learning at home.

For those few students who do not make adequate progress in Tier 2, Tier 3 services may be recommended. Tier 3 may involve a recommendation for special education. All Tier 3 cases require a problem-solving approach in which teachers and parents working as a team decide on a course of action that will result in successful experiences for the individual student (Vaughn, Wanzek, Scammaca, Linan-Thompson, & Woodruff, 2009).

If special education services are to be provided, they must occur in the least restrictive environment, which could be the bilingual, sheltered, or mainstream classroom. The designation ideally provides the student additional support and services with continued and appropriate focus on developing grade-level language and academic competence.

A linguistically appropriate individualized education plan (IEP) should be developed for the student, including these elements:

1. Assessment in both native and English language skills to determine language competence
2. Goals related both to the development of English and the native language, when possible
3. Instructional practices that are known to be effective for English learners, including those that require the active participation of the learner
4. A focus on outcomes, not simply process

The full success of an IEP requires the active involvement of all school personnel and of parents. Accountability is extremely important for designing the best instruction and interventions for learners, as is the establishment of a curriculum-based standard of measurement. Goal setting and a careful look at the possibilities for the year as well as for each month are a critical part of good instruction. In setting annual goals, the teacher must assess the learner’s current level of knowledge and skills and their match to the curriculum. In this way, the approximate level of progress that is likely by the end of the year can be estimated. Short-term objectives require the teacher to break down annual goals into approximately 9 or 10 pieces to make a determination of how much progress a student is likely to make on a monthly basis. The system of measurement must be incorporated into both the goal and objective statements as the teacher describes how progress will be determined. Goal setting is essential both for the learner and for the teacher to maximize progress and the sense of urgency for amelioration. Persistent and continued interventions should be implemented until he or she demonstrates success. An IEP should be adjusted if necessary.

If an English learner has been placed in the special education system, the IEP can provide protection and assurances that he or she would not otherwise have had (Baca & Cervantes, 2004).

Many students who do not qualify for or require special education services would still benefit from the process of setting individually designed goals and objectives, involving families and other school personnel in the plan, and consistently measuring progress, making adjustments as needed.
Student Profiles Revisited

Rahul—Since he had grade-level academic proficiency in his native language, an instructional plan for maximizing Rahul's potential was implemented. He was placed in sheltered classes for all content areas and received one period of intensive ESL instruction. The ESL specialist monitored Rahul's progress during this year of transition and set goals for the academic skills he was missing. During the ESL class, Rahul was taught procedural, organizational, and academic strategies that are used in U.S. schools. Because of the careful ongoing assessment of his progress, Rahul made excellent academic progress this year and has adjusted well to school. It is anticipated that Rahul will move into mainstream classes next year with the exception of language arts and social studies. He will continue to receive sheltered instruction in those subjects and will continue with ESL as well.

Agnessa—With limited literacy skills in Russian and low levels of English proficiency, Agnessa benefitted from an instructional program that included native-language support and comprehensive English language development. A bilingual aide worked with Agnessa, devoting two periods a day to developing beginning literacy skills. As Agnessa acquired more English and academic skills, she began to participate more fully, especially when her teacher used sheltered instruction. Many students with behavior issues similar to Agnessa's act out because of a history of academic failure and/or social rejection. The teacher enlisted the support of Agnessa's parents since the instructional program for Agnessa included behavioral contracts and special reading and writing instruction. Parents who are not literate or are semiliterate can still support their children at home by being involved in the program and overseeing it at home. Agnessa's behavior and affect should be carefully monitored, along with her academic performance, to determine if she is making progress.

Ongoing assessment indicated a significant change in behavior. The successes she experienced with the bilingual aide coupled with increased participation in sheltered lessons helped her relate better to her peers and the teacher. After the teacher began working with Agnessa's family to have the behavior contract reinforced at home, she was more cooperative at school. Her academic gains were more modest. She acquired some basic literacy skills in Russian and her English proficiency increased through systematic English language development. However, she continues to lag behind her peers in all academic areas. It is anticipated that native language support will continue next year and at the appropriate time her literacy skills will be transferred to literacy instruction in English.

Luisa—After several prereferral interventions were implemented, Luisa's academic struggles persisted. When the multidisciplinary team met with her mother, she mentioned that Luisa was referred for special education services by her fifth-grade teacher as a result of persistent difficulties. At that time, she was not tested or recommended for placement because her parents did not approve of this type of approach. Her family now realized the need for more intensive intervention and approved the formal assessment, qualifying Luisa for special education services. The IEP delineated an aggressive instructional plan for maximizing Luisa's potential, which included work with a resource specialist in the school three times a week, focusing on reading and writing development.

With additional support services, Luisa made significant progress throughout the year. Ongoing assessment of the instructional plan was conducted by collecting samples of her work on a regular basis and tracking progress.
Summary

Many schools have students who represent each of the four types of students mentioned in this chapter. Indeed, students’ abilities in a variety of areas, such as native-language levels, English language levels, school experience, academic background, and learning or behavior problems, create an infinite number of complex, individual profiles for students who are often referred to simply as English learners. Students may have high levels of performance in English but not in their native languages, high levels of performance in both languages (type 1), high levels of performance in their native languages but low levels of performance in English (type 2), low levels of performance in all areas due to lack of school experience (type 3), or low levels of performance in all areas due to inadequate instruction or learning or behavior problems (type 4). Students’ abilities can vary within areas and may not fit neatly into types, but this system of analysis assists us in determining how to address the needs of these youngsters.

In order to educate all students appropriately, a systematic process for determining their needs includes gathering data, conducting assessments, and implementing effective instruction in the following areas: (1) native-language knowledge, (2) English language knowledge, (3) academic background and school experience, and (4) learning and behavior challenges. For students who experience persistent problems that are clearly beyond what would normally be expected for students learning English, a team-based intervention plan is developed and student progress is monitored to determine their responses to the interventions.

The remainder of this book will provide specific theory and instructional approaches for teaching that can improve the performance of individuals who are learning English. Chapter 2 will provide theoretical background for the instructional approaches presented in Chapters 3 to 8.

Activities

1. Lupe has lived in a large urban U.S. city for 10 years. She was in bilingual classes in elementary school and is now mainstreamed for all subjects, although her English is not completely fluent. She is friendly and cooperative when she is in class but has high absenteeism. She seems to prefer talking with friends to completing assignments. Teachers think she has academic potential but worry that she will eventually drop out of school because of persistent underachievement. Outline five prereferral interventions that could be implemented with Lupe.

2. Hui came from Vietnam, where he worked with his uncle before emigrating to the United States last year. He had about six years of full-time schooling in Vietnam and two years of intermittent attendance. Now in the tenth grade, he is struggling academically. Draw an “iceberg” representation of Hui’s levels of language proficiency, and explain your reasoning.

3. Sara has lived in the United States for six months. She seems withdrawn and does not socialize much with other students. She was educated in her home country and, in fact, studied some English as a foreign language in school. Her teachers are pleased with her work, given the limited time she has been in this country. What type of student is she, and what is an appropriate educational program for her? What do you think the relationship is between an appropriate academic program and her behavior?