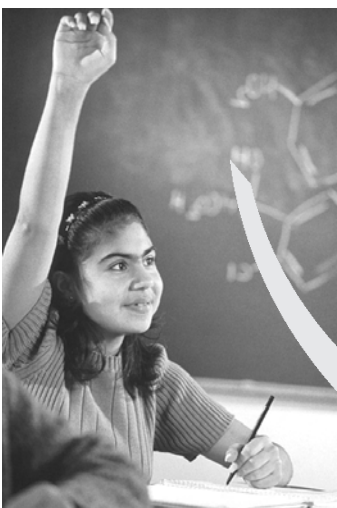
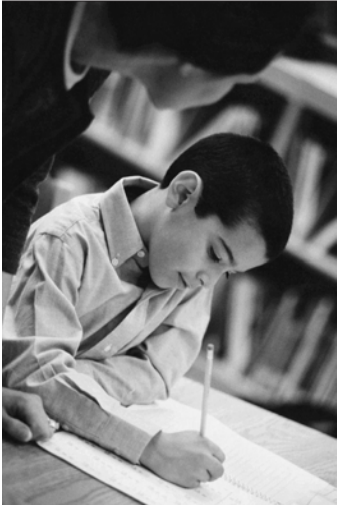


A SCOE Publication, January/February 2009



Developing & delivering lessons with overt language objectives

At a recent professional development session held at the Sonoma County Office of Education (SCOE), teachers voiced frustration at the difficulty of addressing the double challenge facing their second-language learners: acquisition of English *and* accelerated learning of grade-level academic content. Although they have a variety of instructional strategies in their toolkits, the teachers felt that their students weren't making sufficient progress.

These teachers understood that differentiating instruction was key, but how could they pinpoint their students' needs? Where could they find clear guidance on providing lessons that would advance students' language acquisition? What modifications did they need to make in their content lessons to help these second-language learners? What is English Language Development (ELD) really, and how should they teach it?

Sonoma County teachers are not alone in facing these challenges. Schools and districts across the country are seeing increased diversity in their classrooms, including greater numbers of English learners. As a result, more and more teachers are taking a careful look at what their students know and don't know, then trying

Today's teachers must all develop expertise as language teachers and plan their lessons to include a language focus

This Aiming High Resource brief is part of an initiative to boost the achievement of English learners. The publication was developed by the Sonoma County Office of Education; Suzanne Gedney, editor.

to determine what's needed to move them toward becoming proficient English speakers who are academically equivalent to their peers.

The need to modify programs, curriculum, and instruction has spurred some teachers into action. One pioneering group of 65 educators has been meeting over a period of months as part of a Sonoma County Office of Education professional development initiative known as the English Learner Collaborative. With a shared goal of improving instruction for second-language learners, these teachers are learning from classroom-experienced EL specialists and from each other.

Initially their focus was on instructional strategies, but soon they and the Collaborative organizers recognized that strategies alone weren't enough. The teachers really needed to **re-purpose their lessons with a language focus**, then plan instruction and select strategies to meet the specific learning goals they had set for their students.

Focusing on language when planning lessons

Research tells us that when instructional activities have a specific purpose, more meaningful learning occurs—which is why most teachers are taught to write lesson plans as part of their early training. But as experienced teachers prepare for the many lessons they deliver each day and each week, they often find that the lesson plan format they learned in training is too detailed. A more common practice is to consult a pacing calendar, teacher manuals, and other supporting resources to plan lessons a week at a time. Unfortunately, carefully defined learning objectives are often missing from these shortened lesson plans.

Every lesson must have learning objectives. Clearly, a content lesson has objectives based on academic standards. Whether those objectives are written down or assumed, teachers generally know what they are. What's less clear, however, are the learning objectives for second-language learners. Students who are struggling to access the *language* through which the content is delivered need instruction that has *language objectives*. And those language objectives must be folded into both content lessons and language lessons.

Teachers in the English Learner Collaborative have been experimenting with a new format for this kind of lesson planning. Many have adapted the process to their own lesson plan shorthand, but the key idea they are implementing is to purposefully develop and deliver lessons with overt language objectives.

Their lesson planning process begins with determining the purpose of the lesson, which may be content-focused, language-focused, or both. In the same way that lessons have been planned traditionally, the teachers identify the component parts of the instruction they will provide. For the language portion of the lesson, they specify the **language form**—that is, the grammatical structure of words or sentences—and the **language function**—i.e., the language purpose or thinking process—that they want students to master.

Next, the teachers identify the specific standards their lesson will address, including the English Language Development (ELD) standards, correlating grade-level English-Language Arts (ELA) standards, and any other content standards that are applicable to the lesson.

Key vocabulary words that will be taught are also listed on the lesson planning form.

Brandy Raymond, a teacher and CELDT coordinator in the Roseland School District, prepared an ELD lesson for kindergarten students using this planning process. She calls her lesson *Red Leaf, Yellow Leaf* after the book by Lois Ehlert she'll read to her students. She has identified "singular and plural" and "verb usage" as the language forms for her lesson. She'll teach these forms as the kindergartners learn the language function of classifying and explaining "how many." The vocabulary for this lesson includes simple words for things in

Language objectives can vary widely depending on the language proficiency of the target students and their developmental age

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Sample lesson plan format for an ELD lesson

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Grade/Title	Grade 2, Irregular verbs	Proficiency levels	Intermediate to early advanced
Language form	Past/present tense of irregular verbs	Language function	Express action
ELD standard	<i>Intermediate</i> —Produce independent writing that is understood when read, but may include inconsistent use of standard grammatical forms. <i>Early advanced</i> —Produce independent writing with consistent use of standard grammatical forms.		
ELA standard	1.3 Written Conventions: Identify and correctly use various parts of speech, including nouns and verbs, in writing and speaking.		

Language objective

- Students will be able to write sentences using the past and present tense form of irregular verbs to compare historical actions to today. *In the past they _____, but now we _____.*

Vocabulary

- Past, present
- Ate/eat, went/go, had/have, sat/sit

Getting and keeping students engaged

- Introduce past and present, give examples, and have students tell whether specific incidents in their lives are in the past or present.
- Introduce a book on historical Thanksgiving through a “picture walk,” explaining that the boy is in the present, but thinking about the past.
- Have students identify whether pictures are in the past or present.

Check for understanding by ... listening to choral and individual oral responses.

Practice, practice, practice

- Set expectation that “we will use irregular verbs today.”
- Introduce sentence frame and review graphic organizer (Bridge Map).
- Model the sentence frame—*In the past they ate acorns, but now we eat mashed potatoes*—and how to use the Bridge Map.
- Have partners complete sentence frame, then reverse roles.
- Have students share ideas with the whole class, using the frame written on the board and ate/eat on the Bridge Map.
- Repeat with went/go, had/have, sat/sit.

Check for understanding by ... observing, checking in with partners.

Integration through speaking and writing

- Break students into proficiency groupings to write sentences using frames and the irregular verbs on the Bridge Map.
- Work with Early Intermediate group until they are ready to write their sentences.

Check for understanding by ... monitoring and observing students as they complete sentences.

Demonstrate proficiency

- *Intermediate*—Write sentences with the help of the teacher, following the modeled sentence frame. Read finished sentences to partners and/or the teacher.
- *Early Advanced*—Follow the model frame to write at least four sentences independently.

nature: leaf, tree, squirrel, seeds, plant, root.

This lesson for intermediate and early advanced English learners addresses two ELD standards. Students at the intermediate level will be learning to make themselves understood when speaking English (although they may make random language errors). Early advanced students will focus on speaking clearly, correctly, and comprehensively, using standard English grammar.

With this framework, Raymond formulates language objectives for her lesson. She writes the objectives in terms of what her students will be learning or doing:

- Students will be able to classify pictures as “one” or “more than one.”
- Students will be able to use the singular and plural forms of “to be” in sentence frames:
There is one _____. There are many _____.

Language objectives can vary widely depending on the language proficiency of the target students and their developmental age. Thus, an intermediate English learner in the primary grades will require a very different language lesson than an immediate-level high school

student. In contrast to the kindergarten example above, a language objective for an intermediate high school student might be to read sentences aloud, correctly identifying and pronouncing all verb tenses.

In the lesson plans developed by teachers in the English Learner Collaborative, language objectives are framed in what they’ve termed the SWBAT format—that is, Students Will Be Able To ...

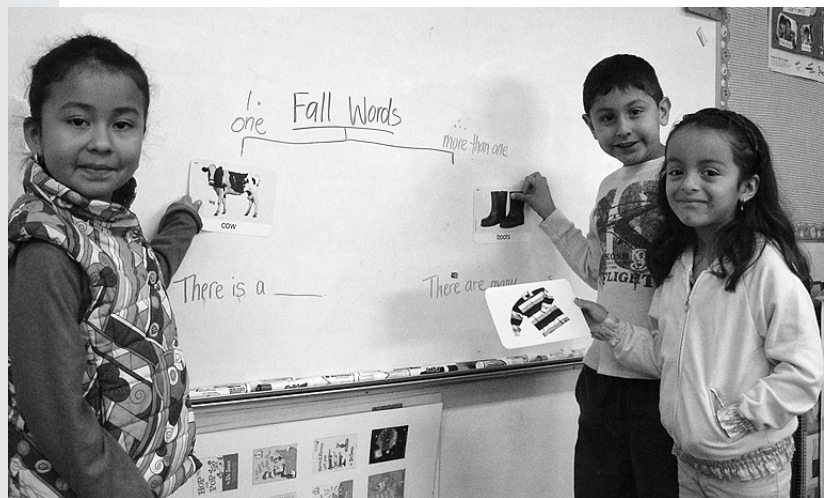
- Describe a photograph using adjectives.
- Persuade their partners using modals (would, could, should).
- Quiz each other using who, what, when, where, and why questions.
- Predict what will happen in a science experiment using future tense, then explain the results in past tense.
- Use academic mathematical vocabulary to explain the steps for “reducing fractions.”

“The articulation of language objectives has often been a missing component in lesson planning,” says Patty Dineen, director of English Language Learner Services at SCOE and one of the coordinators of the Collaborative. “Yet, these teachers are discovering that establishing clear, student-centered language objectives helps focus their instruction. It also allows them to

Detecting language objectives

Planning language objectives isn’t always a simple, straight-forward process—in fact, you could say that it takes a bit of detective work. With the English Language Development standards in hand, try answering these questions to help guide the development of overt language objectives:

- What language **forms** are students struggling with?
- What language **functions** do they need to access content learning?
- What **gaps** most need to be filled?
- What will increase their **fluency**?
- What will help prepare students for the **next proficiency level**? ♦



Roseland Elementary School kindergarten students Alejandra Ruiz, Sebastian Gonzalez, and Litzy Ariza practice classifying objects as singular and plural, then use the words in sentence frames: *There is one cow. There is one shirt. There are many boots.*

begin their lessons by telling students exactly what they'll be learning."

This is important, says Dineen, because research has shown that students experience greater success when they know the learning expectations at the onset of lessons. Teachers should always state—orally and in writing—what the objectives are and how instructional activities contribute to that learning.

Teachers of English learners, especially, must be very explicit in developing purposeful, overtly stated lesson objectives. This tells students where they're headed and prevents them from wandering aimlessly down an instructional path with no idea of the purpose or expected destination.

Providing opportunities to practice

When students are learning a new language, they need many opportunities to practice. Through practice, language structures and vocabulary are assimilated and students can become fluent. This means that, to be effective, lessons with language objectives must include the time and structures for students to use the language they are learning.

Too often, however, English learners spend only *minutes* per day in academic talk. So, a key strategy for teachers in the English Learner Collaborative is to incorporate a significant amount of practice time into their language-focused lessons.

There are many ways to provide language practice. Structured partner and group work, for example, can give every student the opportunity to use target words and language forms. Choral responses, think-pair-share, sentence strips, and sorting information/words using graphic organizers are other common practice structures.

Sentence frames are frequently used to guide and scaffold language practice. They are especially effective because they embed practice into a lesson and are easily adapted to varied levels of proficiency—perfect for differentiating instruction. For this reason, teachers in the Collaborative are incorporating sentence frames in all their language-focused lessons and using them for guided practice with students.

For example, beginning students learning adjectives might use a simple sentence frame like this: *I see a _____*

(adjective) fish. And they might repeatedly use this frame to learn a few new words and to practice hearing, saying, reading, or writing those words.

For students with intermediate language proficiency, the teacher could develop a longer, more complex sentence frame, one that requires two adjectives joined by "and." For example, *I see a _____ and _____ fish in the water.*

The frame for advanced students would use an even more complex sentence: *The photograph has a _____, _____ fish in a _____ environment.*

The following sentence frames, which feature modals, could be used to help secondary students at the intermediate to advanced level learn the language function of "persuasion."

<i>Frame</i>	_____ <i>should</i> _____ <i>because</i> _____.
<i>Sentences</i>	You should eat vegetables because they are good for you. I should conserve water because there is a drought. The federal government should help the auto industry because it would be good for the economy.
<i>Frame</i>	_____ <i>could</i> _____, <i>but that would</i> _____
<i>Sentences</i>	You could always eat at a fast food restaurant, but that would not provide a balanced, healthy diet. I could leave the sprinklers on all night, but that would only waste water. The government could help the auto industry, but that would make the federal deficit bigger.

When providing practice opportunities in their lessons, teachers should remember that students need practice in all language domains—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Sentence frames provide an effective starting place for guided practice, but language-focused lessons should also include strategies and structures for extending language learning through both speaking and writing.

ELD standards are not like content standards

English Language Development (ELD) standards are often called “on-ramps to the highway” that lead students to the English-Language Arts standards. The ELD standards define what students should know or be able to do in order to progress toward grade-level English language skills.

ELD standards are not written in the same manner as the English-Language Arts standards. They’re based on broad descriptions of the five English proficiency levels that cross all grade levels and are not specific to the lexicon, syntax, rules, and structures of English within these bands of proficiency. That’s because students within the proficiency bands may have very different instructional needs.

For example, early intermediate English learners in the primary grades will require very different instruction than early immediate students in middle school, since they differ so significantly in their functional use of language. ♦

should be checked. If students are not understanding, the teacher must re-teach, provide more practice opportunities, or extend the lesson. In some instances, lessons will need to be modified to develop student understanding.

Checking for understanding should also encompass the idea of correcting misunderstandings and incorrect language usage. This is particularly important because when English learners don’t learn language correctly and continue to make the same mistakes, it’s harder for them to acquire proper usage. For instance, if a student consistently says “he” instead of “she” and is not corrected, that student may never learn to use these words properly.

The final component of checking

for understanding is providing a formal assessment activity at the conclusion of the lesson. This assessment should give students the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency in what they have just learned. When some or all of the lesson objectives are language related, the assessment should also be focused on students’ use of language.

Linking language and content learning

Planning instruction with a language focus is important not just for English Language

Development instruction, but for content lessons as well. The process developed by the English Learner Collaborative is also being applied to content lessons. In this instance, lesson plans include *both* content objectives and language objectives. Instruction follows a Specially

Checking for understanding

When developing and delivering lessons to meet the needs of English learners, a teacher’s goal is to:

- Get and keep students engaged.
- Provide opportunities for students to practice language usage.
- Extend learning through multiple speaking and writing activities.
- Advance student proficiency.
- Assess student learning to determine if objectives were met.

One strategy that greatly strengthens language-focused lessons is frequent checking for understanding. This can be as simple as careful listening to students’ oral responses, moving from table to table to check written work, monitoring pair-share and group work, and asking questions to ascertain students’ level of comprehension. Teachers should always incorporate checking for understanding strategies in their lesson plans.

Checking for understanding must be done throughout a lesson, not just at the conclusion—and the learning of students at all levels of proficiency

A key strategy for teachers is to incorporate a significant amount of practice time into language-focused lessons

Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) model, which delivers content instruction along with instruction related to the language forms and functions students need to access that content.

The integration of language and content objectives is being practiced by teachers in the Cloverdale Unified School District. Here, a group of teachers is working as a team to develop districtwide language objectives for lessons that also deliver science content. Several of these teachers have attended Collaborative trainings, then returned to their district to share what they've learned with other staff. They've taught their colleagues to write language objectives using commercially available form-and-function charts from English learner specialist Connie Williams, Ed.D., and a matrix developed by ELD expert Susana Dutro.

The teachers collaborate to plan multiple-week language objectives for science lessons. For example,

English learners need language objectives folded into both content lessons and language lessons

one objective is for students to explain what happened in a science experiment by using past-tense verbs to describe a sequence of actions.

The team develops a planning sheet

of proposed language objectives as a starting point for a three-week cycle of instruction, which individual teachers then incorporate into their daily lesson plans. At the end of the cycle, the staff reviews student achievement and plans new language objectives based on student need.

In a second-grade classroom, a lesson for intermediate ELD students scaffolds a science experiment designed to demonstrate the impact of using more or less force. Students are actively engaged in pushing bottle caps across a numbered game board, using different degrees of force. They add weight to the bottle caps by filling them with clay.

The teacher provides a chart showing past, present,



Wendy Bedolla and Edmundo Fonseca, second graders in Jefferson School's intermediate ELD class, use sentence frames to tell Cloverdale Superintendent Claudia Rosatti what happened in their science experiment.

and future tenses of verbs related to this game-like experiment. Using the words in the chart, the students make predictions about the results they expect, then report on what happened after the actions are complete. They use the following sentence frames, filling in the proper verb tenses.

- *I (will push or pushed) the bottle cap to make it move.*
- *I (will get or got) two points.*
- *The cap (will move or moved) to the number 3.*

The teacher also addresses another language objective—using “more” and “less” before a noun in a sentence. Sentence frames like these provide guided practice:

- *I used ____ force to move the object with clay.*
- *I used ____ force to move the object without clay.*

Another SDAIE example combining content and language objectives can be seen in an algebra class for eighth- and ninth-graders. A lesson on solving two-step linear equations from a Glencoe/McGraw Hill text is scaffolded for English learners at the intermediate and early intermediate level of language proficiency. These students manipulate tiles on a “math mat” to help them visualize the mathematical thinking required for

Defining ELD and SDAIE

The focus of English Language Development (ELD) is learning English. ELD is core curriculum and should be taught every day by a credentialed teacher. Instructional components include vocabulary, language forms (word and sentence structures), and language function (the social and academic purposes for communicating with language).

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) is applied when teaching core content subjects to English learners. It is focused on teaching specific academic content, but also includes instruction that gives students access to the language forms and functions being used in discussions, texts, and resources related to the content learning. ♦

two-step equations, then the teacher uses numbers and mathematical symbols on a white board to represent what they've just learned. For each teacher-guided example, the students are also asked to explain the steps using transition words—first, next, then—and present-tense verbs.

The teacher planned this lesson with two key learning objectives in mind, one related to content and the other related to language.

- **Content objective:** Students will be able to solve two-step linear equations ($3x + 1 = 7$), first using the math mat with “x” tiles, then on white boards using the “subtraction property of equality.”
- **Language objective:** Students will be able to explain the steps for solving two-step equations using transition words and the correct present-tense command verb form.

Replicating the process

Given the demographics of our county's student population, today's teachers must all develop expertise as language teachers and plan their lessons to include a language focus. The teachers in the English Learner

Collaborative are modeling this idea by purposefully developing lessons with overt language objectives. For ELD lessons, they are writing *language* objectives. For academic content lessons, both *content and language* objectives are planned. Objectives are purposeful, clearly based on content and/or ELD standards, and *matched to the proficiency level* of the students.

While most schools are probably a year or two away from adopting new English-Language Arts materials that will provide better resources for English learners, the teachers in the Collaborative are not waiting. They are acquiring the background knowledge and skills to improve English learner instruction, and applying it in their classrooms, to help their students right now.

One of the beneficial aspects of the English Learner Collaborative is that participating teachers are receiving support for this effort from their peers. The Collaborative has created a cross-county working group whose members are learning from each other as they pursue strategies for refining and improving instruction for second-language learners. The idea of teacher-to-teacher mentoring and peer support is not new, but here it is focused on a priority issue for local schools—English learner achievement.

It's important for teachers to remember that they are not alone in addressing the English learner achievement gap. Through grade-level and content-area meetings, peer coaching, and initiatives like the Collaborative, every teacher has access to other experienced educators who are addressing the same challenge. Finding ways to share ideas, problem-solve together, and support one another in implementing strategies for English learner instruction is key. ♦

This publication was developed by the Sonoma County Office of Education in support of Aiming High. For information, contact Patty Dineen, pdineen@scoe.org



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