Language has always been the medium of instruction, but what happens when it becomes a barrier to learning? In this book, Jane Hill and Kirsten Miller take the reenergized strategies from the second edition of Classroom Instruction That Works and apply them to students in the process of acquiring English. New features to this edition include

- The Thinking Language Matrix, which aligns Bloom’s taxonomy with the stages of language acquisition and allows students at all levels to engage in meaningful learning.
- The Academic Language Framework, an easy-to-use tool for incorporating language-development objectives into content instruction.
- Suggestions for helping students develop oral language that leads to improved writing.
- Tips for Teaching that emphasize key points and facilitate instructional planning.

Whether your students are learning English as a second language or are native English speakers who need help with their language development, this practical, research-based book provides the guidance necessary to ensure better results for all.
Language has always been the medium of instruction. As teachers, our automatic use of English helps us to create or produce something new for students. We can create stories, produce explanations, construct meaning when we read, and help students make meaningful connections—all just by opening our mouths.

However, the demographics in our classrooms have changed, and students’ language learning is no longer the sole responsibility of the English as a Second Language teacher. As of the 2010–2011 school year, English language learners made up 13 percent of the student population nationwide (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). It’s not only students learning English who may need language development; it’s also native-born students who enter school without a firm foundation in English language development at a level necessary to access curriculum content. These students may come from lower socioeconomic or other high-risk environments, where they have fewer verbal interactions with peers or parents and other caregivers, which can result in substandard academic language development. These students are similar to some English language learners because, although they are conversationally proficient, such proficiency is not the only language competency needed for academic success.

What do regular classroom teachers need to know to become better supporters of language development? This second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* combines the language development tools used in McREL’s training programs with the newly energized strategies from the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Dean, Hubbell,
Pitler, & Stone, 2012) to provide a comprehensive instructional guide for mainstream teachers of students acquiring English and other students in need of language development.

**What Is Classroom Instruction That Works?**

*Classroom Instruction That Works* describes nine categories of instructional strategies that have a high likelihood of improving student achievement. In 2001, McREL presented the research supporting these categories in the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). In 2012, based on updated research and more than a decade of intervening field experience, our colleagues at McREL wrote the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Dean et al., 2012).

Since the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners* was published in 2006 (Hill & Flynn), we’ve learned a lot about how to foster higher-order thinking and learning for students with limited English proficiency. With this second edition, we’re applying that deeper understanding to each of the nine categories of strategies.

**Organization of the Book**

In the first edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works*, the strategies were organized by the magnitude of their effect size. Many readers took this presentation as a de facto rank ordering, encouraging them to focus on the first several strategies while more or less neglecting the others. As a result, the second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works* reorganized the nine instructional categories into an instructional planning framework that focuses on key aspects of teaching and learning. We use that same framework in this second edition of *Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners*:

I. Creating the Environment for Learning

- Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback
- Reinforcing Effort and Providing Recognition
- Cooperative Learning
II. Helping Students Develop Understanding

- Cues, Questions, and Advance Organizers
- Nonlinguistic Representations
- Summarizing and Note Taking
- Assigning Homework and Providing Practice

III. Helping Students Extend and Apply Knowledge

- Identifying Similarities and Differences
- Generating and Testing Hypotheses

Students learning English as another language need explicit instruction in acquiring academic English. Chapters 1 and 2 provide background information on academic language and the stages of language acquisition. What should we do differently when emerging second-language learners and others who need language development are part of the regular education classroom? In this book, we provide you with tools to apply the Classroom Instruction That Works strategies with your students learning English, including prompts, activities, and updated classroom examples.

Each chapter from 3 through 11 addresses one of the nine categories of research-based strategies for increasing student achievement. These chapters include action-oriented content that more deeply reflects practical ways to apply the strategies to instructing English language learners and others in need of language development, and they offer tips on how teachers can foster English language proficiency as part of subject-matter instruction. Because many second-language learners are in mainstream classrooms for the entire school day, teachers should support language development and content by applying the recommendations offered in this book.

New in This Edition

New to this second edition of Classroom Instruction That Works with English Language Learners are the Thinking Language Matrix and sections that offer opportunities to develop oral academic language (using our Academic Language
Framework). In addition, there are tips for teaching and examples aligned to the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards.

The Thinking Language Matrix

The Thinking Language Matrix aligns the higher-order thinking skills of Bloom’s taxonomy to the stages of second-language acquisition for each specific strategy. The matrix provides a tool for challenging English language learners at all levels of thinking and across all stages of second-language acquisition. It illustrates that a lack of English language proficiency does not necessarily indicate a corresponding lack of higher-order thinking skills. The alignment of stages of second-language acquisition with higher-order thinking effectively encourages new, and more rigorous, approaches to instruction. This approach provides opportunities for second-language learners to think and interact with knowledge at more sophisticated levels.

Educators using the Thinking Language Matrix have experienced epiphanies when they realize that even beginning-level English language learners can work at all levels of higher-order thinking. When students are acquiring English as a new language together with new content, the Thinking Language Matrix provides educators with a framework for thinking about students’ stages of English proficiency in conjunction with what students are expected to accomplish in tasks based on Bloom’s taxonomy. Some educators have suggested using the Thinking Language Matrix as a guideline for addressing rigor with students acquiring English as another language.

Opportunities to develop oral academic language

Research strongly supports the need for English language learners to develop rich oral academic language as a precursor for reading and writing proficiently in English (e.g., August & Shanahan, 2006; Fillmore & Snow, 2000; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Saunders & O’Brien, 2006; Walqui, 2010; Williams & Roberts, 2011). For each strategy, we describe how to incorporate opportunities to develop oral academic language into subject-area content. Teachers of English language learners and others in need of language development recognize the need to support the rich oral academic language of
instructional content but might not be sure about how to make it happen. We offer concrete ways to set the stage for productive academic talk that are aligned to each of the categories of McREL’s research-based instructional strategies.

Examples aligned to standards

As noted in our description of the Thinking Language Matrix, lower-level language skills are not equivalent to lower-level thinking skills similarly, the increased rigor demanded by the Common Core State Standards and the Next Generation Science Standards does not mean that linguistically diverse students can’t meet these standards. Throughout this book, we provide the tools needed to incorporate academic language into content and to address the higher-order thinking skills called for in the current generation of standards. As an additional support, we provide specific examples aligned to the standards using the Academic Language Framework, a tool for infusing language-development standards into content. The framework provides a template for thinking about the language of content and a sequence of steps that will help you select key vocabulary words and grammar concepts and design content-based sentence starters that help students engage in productive academic talk.

Tips for teaching

At the end of Chapters 3 through 11, we pull everything together with a list of tips for teaching students in need of language development. The goal is to make each strategy work for all students, no matter what their stage of language proficiency.

A Note on Acronyms

In this book, we show you how to involve culturally and linguistically diverse students, at all stages of second-language acquisition, in higher-order thinking. These students are in our charge, and it’s our responsibility to help them reach the highest levels of learning possible. We sincerely believe that these students are children first and English language learners second.

To avoid reducing students in need of language development to a label, we have chosen not to refer to them in the acronym-rich language of the field:
ELL, LEP, CLD, or ESL. Rather, we use a number of other descriptors, such as “students acquiring English” and “second-language learners.”

As we run through all of the acronyms used to refer to children (and adults) in the fields of education, psychology, mental health, and social services, we know that we wouldn’t want to be known simply as a series of capital letters. It is our hope that avoiding the use of acronyms in this book will help us keep our collective focus on our students as individuals.
Academic Language

In the 1980s, the field of second-language acquisition was widely influenced by theories developed by Krashen and Terrell (1983) and Cummins (1984). Krashen proposed five hypotheses to explain how another language is acquired, and Cummins introduced us to the differences between basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), or conversational language, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), or what we now know as academic language. (We explore these concepts further in Chapter 2.) More recently, Anstrom and her colleagues (2010) delivered the 50-page *Review of the Literature on Academic English: Implications for K–12 English Language Learners*, which documents the research that contributes to our understanding of academic English and how it is taught and learned.

In other words, this is a complex concept and one addressed by many scholars. In this chapter, we sort through the research to investigate language functions and structures; highlight what it means for students to use productive accountable talk and “sound like a book”—that is, to express their reasoning using academic language; and show how function, structure, and discourse fit into a framework that will help teachers identify the content-area academic language needed to explicitly teach their students.

**Determining Language Functions and Structures**

Language can best be understood as action, rather than form or function alone (Walqui, 2012); students learn to do things with language when they
participate in meaningful activities that engage and challenge them. Students will learn more English when engaged in the action of talking with other students than through typical teacher-directed activities designed solely to deliver content. Participation in oral activities has a dual purpose: it develops conceptual understanding and increases language use.

Fathman, Quinn, and Kessler (1992) point out that “language functions are specific uses of language for accomplishing certain purposes” (p. 12). In other words, the function of language is dependent on its purpose in a given lesson. For example, are students using it to describe? Explain? Persuade?

Language structure, by contrast, refers to the words themselves and how they are strung together into phrases and sentences.

**Language functions**

Language functions exist in both oral and written communication. In real-life conversations, we may need to describe our weekend, explain how to get to a restaurant, or persuade a friend to help us with a project. Knowing how to use these language functions allows us to participate fully in these conversations. In school, we teach students to write for a variety of purposes. For example, we might ask a student to describe an animal in a report, explain how to plant a seed in a procedural manner, or persuade classmates to recycle.

A powerful reciprocal relationship links talking and writing. Talking allows students to develop ideas and language they can use while writing, and writing allows them to develop ideas and language they can express orally.

When teachers ask students to write for a variety of purposes and across different genres, students learn language functions. According to Gibbons (1991), a multitude of language functions for speaking occur in the classroom each day, including the following:
• Agreeing and disagreeing
• Apologizing
• Asking for assistance or directions
• Asking for permission
• Classifying
• Commanding/Giving instructions
• Comparing
• Criticizing
• Denying
• Describing
• Enquiring/Questioning
• Evaluating

• Explaining
• Expressing likes and dislikes
• Expressing obligation
• Expressing position
• Hypothesizing
• Identifying
• Inferring
• Planning and predicting
• Refusing
• Reporting
• Sequencing
• Suggesting
• Warning
• Wishing and hoping

Language structures

The term language structure refers to what students say: the phrasing, key words, and grammatical usage that students acquiring English will need in order to participate in a lesson. Like language functions, language structures exist in both oral and written communication. Whereas language function is the “purpose” for talking, language structure refers to the “what”—the elements that culturally and linguistically diverse students will need to help them get the English out of their mouths.

To identify the language structure that accompanies language function, teachers should think in terms of the following elements:

• Sentence starters
• Key words or vocabulary
• Minilessons on using grammar to communicate meaning (keep in mind that grammar should be taught for practical use in authentic contexts—not as isolated rules)
Returning to the example of the real-life conversation mentioned earlier, when we describe our weekend, we might naturally say something such as “Over the weekend, I went to the zoo. I went to the park. I cleaned my kitchen. I also walked my dog.” Consider the overall phrasing necessary to communicate this information. Appropriate sentence starters could include “Over the weekend, I went to ___” or “I ___ my___.“ Key words could include the names of places and things such as park, zoo, dog, and kitchen. A grammar minilesson could focus on the use of past-tense verbs or the idiomatic expression over the weekend. Let’s take a look at some examples that illustrate the language functions, structures, and objectives that need to be addressed in a lesson.

**Example 1: Sentence starters**

**Subject:** Language Arts  
**Content Objective:** To learn how to express persuasive opinions  
**Language Objective:** To use sentence starters such as “I think” and “In my opinion” to form opinions

The language function is persuading because the lesson involves expressing opinions in order to persuade. The language structure is using the sentence starters “I think” and “In my opinion.” The language objective is therefore using these starters to express opinions.

**Example 2: Key words**

**Subject:** Mathematics  
**Content Objective:** To comprehend the differences between two or more polygons  
**Language Objective:** Using more than and less than to compare polygons

The language function includes both identifying and comparing in a two-step process. Students will need to be able to identify each polygon and then say how the polygons compare to one another.
Because students will need to understand comparative structures such as greater than and less than, the language objective becomes using these phrases to compare polygons.

**Example 3: Minilesson**

Subject: Social Studies  
Content Objective: To understand the period of the 1920s and the women’s rights movement  
Language Objective: To learn contractions in order to make comparisons

Because students will be comparing what women could and couldn’t do—and what they did and didn’t do—in the 1920s, they will need the language function of comparing. The language structure is contractions. The language objective is to learn contractions in order to make comparisons.

**Developing Oral Academic Language: Sound Like a Book**

Conversational language differs from academic language. Conversational language is the informal, chatty way of talking that students use with family and friends, whereas academic language is language used at school and characterized by longer, more complex sentences that contain vocabulary less frequently heard than the vocabulary in everyday spoken English.

Each content area includes particular discourse, or ways of talking. For example, passive voice is common in science, because science is objective and we refer to scientific phenomena by focusing on the action. For example, “experiments were conducted by the scientists.” Students in the process of learning English need teacher modeling of this type of language use and time to interact with others and use the passive voice when they “talk science.”

Just as science is known for passive voice, history is known for chronological discourse, because it’s written according to a time sequence. Certain transitional words, also known as signal words, accompany historical text and are used by authors to link ideas together. The language of time sequences
includes words such as *initially*, *followed by*, *immediately*, *afterwards*, *meanwhile*, and *eventually*. We want students to use these words when discussing history in the classroom. Mathematics, on the other hand, focuses on generalizations and principles, using academic language such as *if . . . then*, *for instance*, *generally*, *it could be argued that*, and *therefore*.

When we ask students to use the language of science, history, or math, we’re asking them to “sound like a book.” Students may initially need to have their learning scaffolded. Teachers can first ask students to verbalize something as if they were their parents or as if they were the principal. Next, students could be asked to sound like a scientist, historian, or mathematician. In analyzing how professionals speak, students should be led to recognize that such speech involves longer, more complex sentences and uses higher-level vocabulary than is common in everyday speech. The use of signal words contributes to creating longer compound sentences.

**The Academic Language Framework**

Given the growing numbers of English language learners and other students in need of language development in our classrooms, simply teaching content is no longer enough. Subject-matter teachers are being called upon to address the academic language that accompanies their content.

The Academic Language Framework (see Appendix A for a blank template) offers a structure for deciphering the language demands of content. Here’s how to use the framework:

1. “Go to the balcony”—step back and get a sense of the big picture—and observe your students when they’re engaged in productive accountable talk. They may be discussing what they have read or are going to write but aren’t yet engaged in the actual task of reading or writing. For example, while addressing a 5th grade English Language Arts standard from the Common Core State Standards (CCSS.ELA-Literacy.R.L5.5), a teacher might ask his or her students to sequence events in one of the chapters from *Sarah, Plain and Tall* by Patricia MacLachlan. This task is recorded in the Task portion of the template (see Figure 1.1).
**Figure 1.1**
Academic Language Framework for a 5th Grade English Language Arts Lesson

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Exemplars</th>
<th><strong>Academic Language</strong></th>
<th><strong>Sentence Starter(s)</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“First, the sky grew dark and everyone went to the storm shelter. While they were in the barn, Sarah remembered some important mementos in the house. Afterwards, Caleb noticed the colors of the sky were the same as the ocean Sarah described.”</td>
<td>sequencing mementos</td>
<td>First, ____. Next, _____. Meanwhile, _____. Afterwards, _____.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. Write down what you expect students to say as they engage in discussion. What rich oral academic language can they use as they sequence events? Record one or two examples in the Exemplars section. In 5th grade, English-proficient students could be expected to say, “First, the sky grew dark and everyone went to the storm shelter. While they were in the barn, Sarah remembered some important mementos in the house. Afterwards, Caleb noticed the colors of the sky were the same as the ocean Sarah described.”

3. Identify the language function word in the task, and record it in the Function of Language section of the template. Examples of language function words are compare, explain, describe, interpret, justify, evaluate, sequence, analyze, and create. (The template shows the verbal noun sequencing, derived from the language function word sequence in the Task column.)
4. Decide what English-language-learning students need in order to engage in this level of academic talk. Record these items in the appropriate parts of the template: Vocabulary, Grammar, and Sentence Starter(s).

**Vocabulary:** key words needed to engage in the standard; for example, *mementos*.

**Grammar:** grammatical structures and parts of speech; for example, adverbs of time.

**Sentence Starters:** sentence starters students will find helpful; for example, *First, _____; Next, _____; Meanwhile, _____; and Afterwards, _____.

In Chapter 3, we demonstrate how to use the framework to set language objectives. Chapter 5 illustrates how to use the framework to incorporate cooperative learning structures while implementing Common Core State Standards in mathematics. In Chapters 7, 8, 10, and 11, we apply the framework to the Next Generation Science Standards and the Common Core State Standards via the strategies of nonlinguistic representations, summarizing and note taking, identifying similarities and differences, and generating and testing hypotheses.

**The Thinking Language Matrix**

Another way to help teachers think about the language that students need in order to be successful is to use McREL’s second-language acquisition and taxonomy matrix (see Figure 1.2) —what we call the Thinking Language Matrix (Hill & Björk, 2008a, 2008b). This matrix aligns the levels of thinking from Bloom’s taxonomy (Bloom, Engelhart, Furst, Hill, & Krathwohl, 1956) to the stages of second-language learning. (For this book, we use Bloom’s original taxonomy from 1956. Although there has been a revision and other taxonomies have since been developed, the original Bloom’s is most familiar to the majority of teachers. When we present new information, such as aligning stages of second-language acquisition with the taxonomy levels, starting with the familiar can help avoid misapprehensions.)

Using the matrix, teachers can address the language demands in their lessons as follows:
1. Identify the taxonomic level of the task you are asking students to perform (Knowledge, Comprehension, Application, Analysis, Synthesis, Evaluation).

2. Ask yourself what you would expect your proficient students to say and do as they participate in the activity. Record this in the Intermediate/Advanced Fluency column. You’ll want to begin with this stage and work backwards because native English speakers or proficient English language learners will meet the description of this stage, and you can use those speakers to gauge other students’ placement.

3. Think about a student you teach who is at one of the earlier stages of second-language acquisition. What is this student going to need in order to be able to participate in a small-group discussion? What is the purpose of the discussion (e.g., to describe, explain, compare, interpret)? What language structure will this student need? Record this in the middle column.

4. Return to the verbs in the taxonomy level and think about your Preproduction students (see Chapter 2 for more information on the stages of second language acquisition). Because they can think at the taxonomic level but cannot verbalize the answer, what can those students do to participate effectively? Can they sketch, symbolize, or illustrate? Record a demonstration in the Preproduction column.

See Appendix B for a blank template of the matrix. The example that follows explains how a teacher might use the process to create the completed matrix shown in Figure 1.2.

The English Language Proficiency Development Framework developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (2012) offers helpful ways to think about the academic language embedded in the Common Core math standards. For example, Common Core Mathematical Practice Standard 1 expects students to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010). At a kindergarten level, a student might be asked to “explain data,” which would be found under Levels of Thinking in Comprehension. With this in mind, a teacher might expect students to say “There are more red blocks than blue blocks because this set has eight and the
The teacher records these examples in the Intermediate/Advanced column. The teacher would then think about the purpose of the small-group discussion and conclude that students are describing how sets are formed. Students then need sentence starters, such as “There are ____ red blocks than blue blocks,” or the specific vocabulary words more, less, and equal. This is recorded in the Early Production/Speech Emergence column. The teacher may decide that the Preproduction students can represent sets with more or less by using red and blue blocks (manipulatives) to represent the data and compare the number of blocks in each set. This demonstration is recorded in the Preproduction column.

Examples of the Thinking Language Matrix appear in each of the following chapters to illustrate how to engage students at all stages of second-language acquisition in the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of Thinking and Language Functions</th>
<th>Tiered Thinking Across Stages of Second-Language Acquisition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of thinking and academic language required for any task; move from concrete recall to more complex, abstract levels.</td>
<td>Language moves from simple to complex in grammatical tenses, forms, vocabulary, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comprehension</th>
<th>Wort</th>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Expand</th>
<th>Sound Like a Book</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>classify, discribe, discuss, explain, express, identify, indicate, locate, recognize, report, restate, review, select, translate</td>
<td>The student represents which set has more/less by arranging the blocks.</td>
<td>Sentence starter: There are ___ red blocks than blue blocks. OR Key vocabulary: more, less, equal</td>
<td>“There are more red blocks than blue blocks because this set has 8 and the other set has 6.” “These two sets are equal because they both have seven blocks.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.2**

Thinking Language Matrix Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preproduction:</th>
<th>Early Production:</th>
<th>Speech Emergence:</th>
<th>Intermediate Fluency:</th>
<th>Advanced Fluency:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>nonverbal response</td>
<td>one-word response</td>
<td>phrases or short sentences</td>
<td>longer and more complex sentences</td>
<td>near native</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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other set has six” or “These two sets are equal because they both have seven blocks.”
References


References


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