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**CHAPTER 1: ENGLISH LEARNERS IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CLASSROOMS**

**PURPOSE:** To become generally acquainted with diversity among English learners; cultural considerations for teaching and learning, ways to promote English learners’ inclusion and participation in the classroom, language policy, different kinds of language support programs available, and introduction to using the Internet and other digital tools with English learners.

Chapter Overview: In Chapter 1, we provide ideas intended to help teachers find out more about English learners in K-12 classrooms, especially with regard to the different languages, cultures, social circumstances and life histories they bring to class. Getting to know and understand English learners can be a challenge when teachers do not share the same language, culture, and life experiences. Yet doing so is essential in order to build upon the knowledge and strengths they bring to the learning enterprise. In addition to learning about students, it is important to find ways to help them feel comfortable in classrooms and begin to become part of the group. Therefore, in this chapter, we also introduce ways to help students adjust to classroom routines and become part of the social fabric of the classroom community. This chapter also provides definitions and uses of various Internet and other digital tools to support English learner education

Classroom instruction is subject to influences beyond the classroom and school. For example, state and federal governments pass laws that affect education. Therefore, in this chapter, we describe current policy trends affecting English learners and their teachers, including the trend toward national standards and high stakes testing. Finally, we offer information on different kinds of English learner support programs and resources that may be useful in promoting students' language and literacy development to the fullest extent.

**Objectives:**

By the end of the chapter, students should be able to:

1. Identify at least three ways to obtain background information about their English learners in terms of languages they speak, cultural traditions, family circumstances, and life histories.

2. Identify and explain how at least three cultural differences between them and their students may affect teaching and learning.

3. Identify and describe at least three things the teacher can do to ease newcomers into the routines in the classroom when they know little or no English.

4. Analyze positive and negative effects of current federal education policy on English learners.

5. Discuss the pros and cons of national academic standards and high- stakes testing in terms of their effects on English learners.

6. Describe several kinds of language support programs that have been designed to assist English learners in school

7. Discuss several uses of the Internet and explain how they may benefit English learners.

**KEY VOCABULARY**

English language learners

Definitions of culture

Academic standards

Participation structures

High-stakes testing

Classroom culture

No Child Left Behind Act

English learner language support programs:

Bilingual education: Transitional,

Maintenance, Immersion, Two-way

Immersion, Newcomer programs;

English-only language support programs:

Sheltered English/SDAIE,

English Language Development (ELD)

Structured English immersion, ESL pull-out

**CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES**

**NOTE:** Each activity below is designed to be done BEFORE students read the chapter and is meant to help them prepare for reading the chapter successfully. The activities are meant to involve students with ideas rather than with the lecture only.

1. Divide the class into groups of three to five students each. Ask each group to take three of the cultural content categories in the "Cultural Content and Questions" chart. One group would take the first three: Family structures, the Life Cycles, and Roles and Interpersonal Relationships and discuss their personal culture in terms of these contents. Other groups would take the next three contents and so on. We like to give examples of our own cultures to introduce this topic; for example, coming from an Irish family, Owen sees everyone who marries into the family as "Family.” He once discovered after thirty years that an uncle was not an uncle in common U.S. terms, but had married into the family. We also had an Egyptian friend who received a "surprise" visit from five relatives who stayed for about five weeks in his house. We ask students how this would have been received in their family. Our friend Mohammed not only didn't complain; he was sorry to see them go when the five weeks were over.

2. In a discussion of participation structures, you might ask students to describe common structures and expectations in U.S. classrooms. They could share their knowledge of participation structures in other cultures, such as standing up when answering a question in class or rarely working in cooperative groups. We remember one parent who visited our class and saw students busily working in small groups. Expecting lectures in school, the parent asked us when we were going to teach. Ask your students to brainstorm answers to parents who may have different expectations of student and teacher conduct in the classroom.

3. Ask your students to brainstorm ways to make it easier for English learners to become integrated into the regular classroom routines. Ask them to be very specific about strategies they would use or strategies they have seen used in classrooms.

4. Check your students' knowledge about different program types they know about for English language learners in your area, listing them on the board as you go along. Make a note of any program types missing in the list. Ask your students to compare the programs with one another. Are some programs inherently better for all students? Are all programs equal in their ability to meet the needs of ELL students? What are their own biases about bilingual programs and others?

5. With a partner, make a list of Internet tools used in classrooms, including K-12 classes and your own college courses. Together, choose three tools that might be helpful to English learners. What do you see as some challenges and benefits of using these tools with learners at different grades and English language proficiencies?

**TEST QUESTIONS**

**Multiple** **Choice Questions:**

1. Which of the following recommendations for becoming familiar with your English learners is not made by the text?

a. Find out what language is spoken in the student’s home;

b. Get as much information as you can about the student’s previous schooling;

c. Become aware of basic features of the student’s culture;

d. Send home a survey for parents to fill out.

2. Which of the following is not a recommended way to get to know a student?

a. Have students write an illustrated autobiography.

b. Have students keep a dialogue journal;

c. Do a unit on family origins;

d. Have students prepare a formal talk to be given in the front of the classroom.

3. Which of the following are key aspects of a culture?

a. Family structures, life cycles, roles and interpersonal relationships,

b. Ideas about discipline, use of time and space; religion;

c. Food, health and hygiene practices, history and traditions;

d. All of the above.

4. Cultural differences with regard to “space” relate to:

a. Special meanings given to cardinal directions: north, south, east, west

b. The spatial organization of the home

c. How far apart people should stand when speaking

d. All of the above.

5. Cultural rules governing sociolinguistic interactions include:

a. When to speak and when to remain silent

b. Who has the right to initiate a conversation

c. Wait time between conversational turns

d. All of the above.

6. Participation structures in the classroom relates to:

a. The organization of groups with corresponding rules for talking and listening

b. How students participate in activities outside the classroom

c. Whether students are motivated by the way the classroom is organized

d. Whether there is a balance between large and small groups in the classroom

7. Traditional literacy uses from a child’s home will have the most influence on:

a. A student’s attitudes toward literacy and valuing of literacy

b. Whether a student will enjoy school

c. Whether a student will learn to read in your classroom

d. Whether a student will be successful in elementary school

8. One of the best ways you can help a new second language learner in your classroom is to

a. Study foods and holidays from their country

b. Study subjects that will be easy for the student

c. Create a secure classroom where the student feels he or she belongs

d. Make sure the student works in groups

9. One main purpose of bilingual programs is to:

a. assist students with learning content in their own language until they are proficient enough in English to learn well in the regular classroom;

b. help second language learners learn content;

c. put off the time students will have to function in their home classroom

d. all of the above

10 Which of the following is not one of the quality indicators discussed in this chapter?

a. comprehensive English as a Second Language instruction for linguistically diverse students, which prepares them to handle content area material in English

b. instruction in the content areas, which is academically challenging but is also tailored to the linguistic proficiency, educational background, and academic needs of students

c. making sure that all classes focus on English and use limited amounts of students’ primary language

d. opportunities for students to further develop or use their first language in order to promote academic and social development

11. Which of the following statements describes a positive trait of technology-assisted instruction for English learners?

a. promotes affective involvement and identity investment

b. builds on students’ prior knowledge and experience

c. engages students in active, self-regulated, collaborative enquiry

d. all of the above

**Essay Questions:**

1. If you were a counselor and a part of your job was to place English Language Learners in an appropriate language support program, which type of program would you feel best suited a second-grade Spanish monolingual student who knows little English but can read in Spanish at the first-grade level? Compare and contrast two possible program types and discuss why you might select one program over another for this second grader.

2. How would you integrate students from different cultures into your classroom? Imagine that it is the first part of November and you received three new students: one from Mexico, one from Russia, and one from Taiwan. Using examples, describe (1) how you would evaluate the new students’ strengths and needs; (2) specific activities you would incorporate into your classroom routines to facilitate their feeling of belonging in your class; and (3) strategies you might use to prepare the student for involvement with other students in groups and pairs?

3. Discuss the role you believe the focus on academic standards and assessment will have on you as an individual teacher. In addition, discuss the use of high-stakes, standardized testing in the evaluation of student progress. How will you deal with the very real situation of your students being tested, your classroom being evaluated, and your school and program being assessed?