

**** Editor's Note: We are changing the format of "At Issue," beginning this month. Instead of having guest writers discuss a pre-chosen topic, we want to use this section to respond to questions and comments sent in by readers. Dr. Suzanne Irujo will answer the questions and respond to the comments and also use them as the basis for discussion of issues of importance in the education of ELLs. So read this month's column with the new format, see what you think, and send us your questions, concerns, and ideas for the column. ****

THE ELL OUTLOOK Volume 2, Issue 8, November 2003

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~~ **IN THE NEWS** ~~

Just cut and paste links into your browser to view stories.

Family adjusts to English-only law

The Boston Globe - 10/12/03

Immersion poses challenges to families as well as students

http://www.boston.com/news/local/articles/2003/10/12/family_adjusts_to_english_only_law/

Immersion waivers granted unevenly

The Boston Globe - 10/14/03

Bilingual classes still allowed for struggling students, but district participation varies

http://www.boston.com/news/education/k_12/articles/2003/10/14/immersion_waivers_granted_unevenly/

No-Spanish rule vexes students

The Arizona Republic - 10/16/03

Some say policy takes English immersion mandate beyond its boundaries

<http://www.azcentral.com/arizonarepublic/local/articles/1016Spanish.html>

Speaking to student heritage

The Washington Post - 10/30/03

"Spanish for Native Speakers" class builds heritage speakers' skills

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A38008-2003Oct29.html>

School districts struggle with English fluency mandate

The New York Times - 11/5/03

Some see "Catch-22" in No Child Left Behind requirements for ELLs

<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/05/national/05ENGL.html>

~~ **AT ISSUE** ~~

TEACHER'S GUIDES, "SCRIPTS," AND LESSON PLANNING

By Suzanne Irujo

ELL Outlook Contributing Writer

A few years ago, I wrote a review of a newly published program for elementary school English language learners (*TESL-EJ*, Vol. 3, No. 1, R-8, 1997). The review was very favorable, and I specifically mentioned that I thought the teacher's guides did a good job of providing guidance for inexperienced teachers as well as flexibility for experienced teachers. A few months after the review was published, I received an e-mail message from a teacher who was obviously very frustrated with the program, challenging my assertion that the teacher's guides provided sufficient guidance and claiming that it was impossible to figure out how to teach with these materials.

This incident brings up the issue of the role teacher's guides should play in curriculum development and lesson planning and the issue of "scripting" in teacher's guides. Experienced teachers, while they may use the guides for ideas, seldom rely exclusively on them (or, indeed, on any specific set of materials). Beginning teachers, however, often want very explicit instructions for how to use the materials and are often grateful for the "scripts" that many publishers are now providing.

Scripting of teacher's guides is not new. When I began teaching over 25 years ago, the teacher's guides for the reading materials used in my school contained word-for-word scripts for everything the teacher should say and do during a reading lesson. I still vividly remember an incident that occurred during my first year of teaching. I

had mentioned to a colleague that I was spending a lot of time preparing detailed lesson plans for multiple reading groups daily, and she looked at me in disbelief. She then gently assured me that there was no need to prepare all those lessons. Indeed, I didn't even have to read the stories the students were reading! All I had to do was follow the scripts in the teacher's guides.

At that time, I didn't believe that using questions and activities designed by somebody who did not know me or my students was the most effective way to teach. I still don't. Teaching is an interactive process in which teachers constantly monitor what they are doing, observe and evaluate what their students are doing, and use the information they gather to adjust their own teaching. This constant adjustment and readjustment of teaching strategies according to how well students are learning the knowledge and skills being taught is lost during scripted instruction.

Another disadvantage of scripting is that it sends the message to teachers that the writers of textbooks and teacher's guides know much more about teaching than teachers themselves do. When teachers come to rely totally on materials and lesson plans created by others, they lose their own sense of responsibility for their students' learning. It's easy to believe that, because these materials were created by "experts," if teachers do exactly what the materials dictate it will surely be true that their students will learn.

Over 15 years ago, a classic work by Frank Smith (*Insult to Intelligence: The Bureaucratic Invasion of Our Classrooms*, 1986) condemned materials that tell teachers what to do and what to say at all times. This way of teaching not only disempowers teachers, it also robs students of opportunities to develop critical thinking skills. Smith suggested that teachers combat the "insult to intelligence" that was being forced on them with programmatic instructional materials by questioning everything they were asked to do, eliminating as much as possible of what was not beneficial to their students, and acknowledging that if some of the non-beneficial work had to be done, students should at least know that it was not vital to their learning.

One of the reasons that the issue of scripting has returned now is because of the current focus on "research-based" materials. Publishers are making strong claims for the research base of their products. In order to maintain those claims, the materials must be used as the publishers intend, and in order to achieve that, the publishers provide scripts for teachers. Beginning teachers as well as more experienced teachers who are overwhelmed by having large numbers of ELLs in their classrooms are often grateful to be provided with teacher's guides that relieve them of some of the burden of planning. In the process, however, these scripts also relieve them of responsibility and diminish the value of their teaching.

Scripting is not appropriate for any student, but it is even less so for ELLs. Many of the indicators included in the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, *Making Content Comprehensible for English Language Learners: The SIOP Model*, 2000), which is proving to be very useful for training teachers to use effective techniques with ELLs, would be impossible to implement if the teacher relied exclusively on previously written teaching scripts. For example, concepts cannot be linked to students' background experiences unless the teacher is familiar with those experiences. Use of scaffolding and assessment of students' comprehension throughout a lesson cannot be scripted because they depend on

students' understandings at the moment. Interactions and discussions are crucial for ELLs' learning of new concepts, but they are by their very nature not scriptable.

I've now shared my beliefs about scripted teacher's guides, but I haven't helped the teacher who was getting so frustrated trying to teach from the particular materials that I had reviewed. I suspect that my answer would not satisfy him anyway. Publishers can—and do—try to make their materials as effective and as easy to use as possible, but the reality is that teachers have to figure out for themselves what works for them and for their students. It's that simple—and that difficult.

~~ **SPECIAL FEATURE** ~~

A READER'S RESPONSE: AN OPEN LETTER TO FRANK EDGERTON

This letter was written in response to an article printed in last month's issue, "The Education of ELLs in Maryland: An Interview with Frank Edgerton." For copies of the October newsletter e-mail Alex at alex@coursecrafters.com.

Dear Frank,

I just read the article in the October issue of *The ELL Outlook* and would like to debate your stand that L1 support or L1 instruction provides an unfair advantage for particular language groups.

I believe we should help every student we can to learn as much as possible. A doctor saves all the patients she or he can and doesn't allow everyone to die out of fairness to those for whom we have no medicine. If we were to take the "L1 instruction = unfair advantage" argument to the absurd but logical conclusion, teaching in English gives an unfair advantage to native English speakers so we should teach in a language no one knows in order to treat everyone equally.

In a collaborative environment, all students benefit when others understand what's going on. I hope Maryland does not still have classrooms where teachers grade on a curve and students have to compete over a limited number of As. While teachers might decide to take lack of L1 support or L1 instruction into consideration in a grading policy, I think it is unethical to withhold L1 support or L1 instruction from a student if we know it is available.

I don't believe we should be promoting equal disadvantage for all ELLs. As you know, bilingual education is an option in Maryland and it is supported by research. I believe we should use it wherever possible. I'm sure you are familiar with two-way immersion programs and their benefit for ELL students and native English speakers. I believe we should be looking for ways to implement those programs more.

I appreciate your tireless efforts to provide educational opportunities for Maryland's ELL students. Thanks for considering my opinion on the quote I read in *The ELL Outlook*.

Sincerely,
Ryan Monroe
Coordinator
English Learner Educational Services Program

McDaniel College
Westminster, Maryland

~ ~ FROM THE FIELD ~ ~

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF QUESTION 2 IN MASSACHUSETTS: THE EFFECT ON BILINGUAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

By Michelle Adam
ELL Outlook Staff Writer

English-only legislation became law by the mere touch of a button during the Massachusetts "Question 2" voter initiative last November. Unfortunately, those on the front lines who are required to implement Question 2 are now feeling the ground-level consequences of putting politics into practice.

"Everything is new. It's very confusing," said Sara Nuñez, a seventh- and eighth-grade math teacher for ELLs at Thurgood Marshall Middle School in Lynn, Massachusetts. "At the beginning I didn't know where I was going, but now I try to speak English more. I don't teach concepts in Spanish any more. All posters are in English and everything on the blackboard is in English. I see my students' frustrations, but all I can tell them is that I'm sorry."

Nuñez's experience mirrors that of several other Lynn Public School teachers whom *The ELL Outlook* recently interviewed. The school system is doing its best to adapt to the state's new English-only laws: all classrooms need to teach primarily in English, provide classroom tests and the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) in English (students used to be able to take these tests in their native language, if needed), and transfer sheltered English students to mainstream classes within one year (three years of transition time were offered previously). Teachers, however, are feeling the direct impact of converting from bilingual coursework to English-immersion standards overnight.

Nuñez, who has worked as a bilingual seventh- and eighth-grade math teacher for Marshall Middle School for ten years, is now grappling with teaching English-only classes. She used to teach everything in both Spanish and English in her predominately Spanish-speaking classroom. She was also allowed to give her students the MCAS in Spanish, as well as allow them to write in their native language.

"I didn't force them to write in English before, but now I am pushing them in English," she said. "And I still use a little Spanish, especially with new arrivals, but they want me to teach English a lot more than before."

While it appears sensible for students to be required to learn, write, and take tests primarily in English (especially in a country where English is the primary language), Nuñez faces unique challenges when it comes to teaching her students. As she explained, "Most of the population I work with—Dominicans, Guatemalans, El Salvadorians—are not like those students coming from Russia or China. They are from a third-world country where education isn't required. Most of them don't even come with a good foundation in their own language. If they don't know how to read in their own language, it's hard for them to learn in any other language."

Nuñez said that 85 percent of her students have very little educational foundation, and each year at least 70 percent of them are new to the United States. They often enter the school system at different times during the year, without preparation or former education.

"Before, the students didn't get behind because they were learning subject matter in their own language. Now I feel that the students are lost. A couple of weeks ago I gave a test in English. The only ones who did well were the ones who were here for an entire year. And even their comprehension is not that good," said Nuñez. "Some will find their way, but I am afraid that in high school a lot of them will drop out."

Only days before our interview, Nuñez received training in English immersion through the Lynn Public School System. She is now learning to use more manipulatives (using concrete objects and other tools to teach students basic math skills) and is working on students' skills first before teaching them the appropriate words to describe classroom activities. Her students are also receiving two periods of English a day, instead of only one as in the past.

"I think we were doing well before in my school. We always integrated students into regular classrooms when they were ready," said Nuñez. "I was trained to be a bilingual teacher, not a sheltered English teacher. I think we have a lot to learn to be effective."

Teachers at Lynn's elementary level have received more English-immersion training than middle and high school teachers because Lynn began training efforts at the elementary level, but elementary teachers struggle with some of the same issues that Nuñez faces.

One such teacher, Natalie Ciulla, has gone from teaching first-grade regular education during her previous four years to teaching third-grade sheltered English classes at Lynn's E.J. Harrington Elementary School. And, unlike Nuñez, she is attempting to teach eight Spanish-speaking students, most of whom are new arrivals to this country, with little Spanish under her own belt.

"I didn't necessarily have a choice. I was bumped from my job and a lot of people wanted regular education students," she said. "Some of my children have never gone to school before. Every day is a challenge for a different reason. I constantly come up against roadblocks."

Ciulla attends workshops every Monday afternoon, learning how to work with sheltered-English methods of teaching, such as working with a lot of visuals, reading aloud, creating collaborative learning strategies, and building on prior knowledge. She also receives support from curriculum instructors and bilingual teachers if needed.

"The challenge is that eight children will all have to take the MCAS in English. It's a stress in wondering if it's going to work. It's a third-grade level test, and my students need to be able to comprehend on a third-grade level even if they've never gone to school. I'm trying to cram six years into six months," said Ciulla. "In this job, I'm not sure if I should be concentrating on language or curriculum. There are so many things to concentrate on. I am doing the best job I can. But people in this position find themselves between a rock and a hard place."

Ciulla's classroom is considered a Sheltered English Immersion 1 (SEI 1) classroom, whereas those students labeled SEI 2 are now mainstreamed into regular classes. Her classroom is intended to provide a foundation from which students can transfer to mainstream classes. Through this process, however, Ciulla finds that many of her students, who have little English competency, are isolated from those students with stronger English skills.

Ciulla uses the regular third-grade curriculum, which includes using Mimosa activity- and language-based K–5 mathematics programs, and the Rigby Reading Series. She has also discovered that using visuals and models and offering many opportunities to speak and listen to a new language have been helpful to her students.

No matter what she does, teaching her students subject material as well as English is going to take time. However, her students will be required to take MCAS in English, no matter how recent their arrival in the country. Said Ciulla, "I think this process needs time and patience. To acquire a new language takes more than we could imagine."

Time is something that teachers like Ciulla seem to have less and less of since the passing of Question 2. Alcides Jusino, a former fourth-grade bilingual teacher who is also teaching Sheltered English Immersion at Lynn's E.J. Harrington Elementary School, has been coming up against this same challenge.

As he said, "I have no doubts that the students can do it, but I feel the pressure of time limits. Some of my students are not ready for this. I have only so much time in the day to come out with so much."

Although ideally he should have no more than 12 students, Jusino teaches 20 Spanish-speaking students, many of whom are new to the United States, and none of whom have been here for more than three years. He still teaches in similar ways as in the past, but with less use of Spanish.

"This year I need to use more English and very little Spanish. Before I used both languages simultaneously, according to the pace of the students," said Jusino. "As a teacher I do what is best for my students, though. If my students need more support in Spanish I help them by explaining concepts in Spanish. If the president of the United States were to ask me, 'Do you use native language in the classroom?', I would say, 'Yes, sir.' We need to use what we can to get instruction through to the students."

As with other teachers interviewed, Jusino has had to address the needs of new arrivals who come to this country with very little previous education. "Right now 90 percent of my language use is in English. But I have newcomers—one arrived the other day—and I have to teach them in English when they aren't even literate in their own language. What do I do?" he said. "Everything I write on the board is in English, but if it's necessary to explain to them in Spanish, I will."

One potential positive outcome of Question 2 and No Child Left Behind, according to Jusino, is that he has received much more support in terms of materials (such as teacher's guides and posters) and teacher training. He has also had subject specialists visit his classroom to provide coaching and support. "It's more structured,

with more materials and support, but there's also more work to be done and outcomes that everyone wants to see," said Jusino.

He recognizes that politics and educational theory don't add up to much until effectively put into practice. This, of course, is his challenge, and that of so many Massachusetts teachers who want to see their ELL students succeed. "The ball game has changed," said Jusino. "I'm pushing for my best, but let's see what happens."

~ ~ **ELL UPDATE** ~ ~

WORK BY ELL LITERACY PANEL POINTS TO THE NEED FOR MORE RESEARCH

After two years and a formal analysis of the important research that has been published on how language minority students become literate in English, the National Literacy Panel is scheduled to present an update of their work at the National Reading Conference on December 4th of this year. Meant to complement the earlier work of the National Reading Panel (which did not include ELLs as part of their study), the panel for language minority children and youth reviewed "the experimental, quasi-experimental, qualitative, and psychometric research literature relevant to a set of selected problems judged to be of central importance to developing literacy in language-minority children and youth, including English language learners" (National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth, "Update on Activities," August, 2002).

But according to Dr. Diane August, the principal investigator and project director for the panel, the "National Reading Panel looked mostly at instruction . . . we are taking a broader view." The National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth focused their review on six domains:

1. the relationship between oracy and literacy;
2. the relationship between L1 and L2 literacy;
3. literacy development;
4. the context for literacy development;
5. effective instruction and professional development; and
6. assessment.

Some important subquestions researched by the National Literacy Panel were:

- "What is the influence of cultural factors on second language literacy?"
- "What is the rate and course of L2 literacy development for at-risk, successful, and unsuccessful groups of students?"
- "Is good reading instruction the same for all students whether or not they are proficient in English?"

(National Literacy Panel for Language Minority Children and Youth, "Update on Activities," August, 2002)

Although the final report on their findings is being redrafted for release in early summer of 2004, August summarized that "generally what we are doing for English only kids [native speakers of English] is a good place to start for ELLs, but you really need to make accommodations for ELLs to take account of the challenges they have acquiring literacy in a second language as well as the strengths they bring to the process." And, while they found a "rich body of research that might be drawn on to formulate hypotheses about best practice," there is a need for additional experimental and quasi-experimental research to verify many assumptions.

Yet if findings about best practice are limited to a few studies, how can ELL teachers be expected to implement research-based literacy instruction?

"It is a real issue," August said, calling for more high-quality research on effective practice.

There is also the concern that the Reading First law, which was based on the work done by the National Reading Panel that didn't consider ELLs, is being applied improperly to the instruction of ELLs. While the National Reading Panel established five areas of effective instruction of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and text comprehension), it is unclear to what extent this instruction, designed for native speakers of English, is also effective with ELLs. How can the Reading First portion of No Child Left Behind, which requires "reading programs in kindergarten through grade 3 that are based on scientifically based reading research" (NCLB, Section 1201), be applied to ELL programs?

In answer to these questions, August stated that it was indeed a problem, but that "the National Literacy Panel report will be a helpful starting place for answers to this question."

The ELL Outlook will continue to publish reports on the work of the National Literacy Panel for Linguistic Minority Children and Youth as they are released.

~ ~ **FROM THE STATES** ~ ~

CONFERENCE REPORT: THE FIFTH ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTE FOR ENGLISH LEARNERS AND IMMIGRANT STUDENTS

Held on October 19th to 21st in Santa Barbara, California, the Fifth Annual Accountability Institute for English Learners and Immigrant Students brought together ELL educators from across California. Below is a day-by-day account from the Institute.

By Cecilia Mónico-Mozdzierz
ELL Outlook Contributing Writer

October 20, 2003

8:00–8:30 a.m.

The Doubletree Resort was bustling with activity, and the Institute's registration desk was busy helping people. I overheard conversations among friends catching up on their lives, or among colleagues about the test craziness that does not give teachers enough time to teach.

The Grand Ballroom was full, with about 300 people there for the opening session. Jan Mayer, Manager of the Language Policy & Leadership Office, California Department of Education, welcomed us. She pointed out an article in *USA Today* stating that one out of every five people in the United States speaks a language

other than English. She used that information as a springboard for the conference's focus. Everybody seemed anxious to learn about accountability and ELLs!

Jack O'Connell, California Superintendent of Public Instruction, followed Mayar. O'Connell is a charismatic man who started by telling jokes about the state's new governor and the changes that may bring to Sacramento. Then he reminded us that in California there are 1.6 million English language learners (a 32 percent growth rate for 2003) and 253,000 immigrant students attending public schools. He restated California's commitment to provide a quality, standards-based education for ELL students as well as for regular students.

O'Connell went on to state that scores on the CELDT (California English Language Development Test) have continued to increase over the years. However, he also acknowledged there are "too many tests," a statement that was received with a big round of applause. He then emphasized the importance of quality instructional programs to ensure success for students.

9:20–10:30 a.m.

WHY DON'T ENGLISH LEARNERS (ELs) JUST LEARN STANDARD ENGLISH? RESOLVING THE CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE PRINCIPLES OF LANGUAGE SCIENCE AND OUR EXPERIENCE IN THE CLASSROOM

Presenter: Otto Santa Ana, Ph.D., UCLA

Professor Santa Ana is a sociolinguist who presented a very interesting perspective on teaching ELLs standard English based on their vernacular language. He proposed teaching students about the different kinds of English but concentrating on standard English as a way to ensure success in school and society. This does not mean students should reject the vernacular, but rather they should use standard English to complement it. He gave good examples of actors such as Denzel Washington speaking standard English for some roles and a more vernacular English for other roles.

Interesting perspective. It emphasizes respect for how language acquisition really happens. It also emphasizes a metalinguistic awareness of language that I believe is crucial in order for our kids to learn. This ties in nicely with the different vocabularies theory too.

P.M.

One of the afternoon sessions, "Federal Requirements, Local Opportunities: Using NCLB Title III and Title I to Improve Local Accountability for English Learners," focused on assessment. The presenters were Robert Linqanti, Ph.D., WestEd; Jan Mayer, ED.D.; and Cathy George, California Department of Education. They explained the requirements of Title III Annual Measurable Achievement Objectives (AMAOs) and of Title I Annual Measurable Objectives for Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) as they pertain to ELLs as a subgroup. In general the No Child Left Behind act (NCLB) was a hot topic at the Institute, since this year there is the added pressure of compliance with it. Sessions covering this topic were typically full.

The other four afternoon sessions were related to instructional methodologies for effectively teaching English, including one on effective teaching of writing to ELL

students presented by the San Diego County Office of Education. The program they have developed, called WRITE, presents a very scaffolded approach to writing that seemed well received by the audience.

I sat next to the superintendent of a district in the desert area whose ELL population has increased from 300 to 1500 in three years. She is sending her teachers to training on ELL education and is using the WRITE program with good results.

October 21, 2003

Vanessa Girard from WestEd presented "Research-Based Instruction for K–6 English Learners." She emphasized the importance of a systematic approach at the district and school levels, with the issues to consider being instructional programs, NCLB requirements, and English language development standards. She pointed out, very accurately, the difficulties created by the lack of a GOOD, SYSTEMATIC, and EXPLICIT enough English language program. The audience agreed by applauding.

An important part of a systematic approach is built-in accountability for all personnel implementing English learner initiatives and for English learner achievement.

A very interesting discussion on the correlation of socioeconomic class and the language gap was presented. As the presenter quoted: "It is now well accepted that the chief cause of the achievement gap between socioeconomic groups is a language gap" (Hirsch, 2003).

Girard also discussed Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) strategies and how they fail to teach academic language because they are mostly used to teach content rather than language.

Conclusions

It seems to me that administrators are mostly concerned with improving the quality of programs offered to ELL students. With NCLB in place, accountability is an additional factor that needs to be addressed.

What seems clear is that the focus should not be on testing, but rather on good standards-based instruction that will give better test results and a higher percentage of reclassified children more quickly. ELD standards and their correlation to core program standards were often brought up as a must.

Administrators at the Institute seemed concerned with testing only as a requirement to prove progress of their programs; there seems to be a parallel and more important concern of providing high quality education that speeds reclassification and ensures students' success when they transfer to regular classrooms.

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If you are in a school district that has implemented an interesting and successful program for ELLs and you'd like to be featured in the *ELL Outlook*, contact Alex.

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