Reaching and Teaching ELLs: Bridging for Language and Learning
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Reaching English Language Learners in Every Classroom, published 2012
For additional reading: See November 2013 Ed Leadership Magazine on Informational Text, title: “Tackling Complex Text with Language Learners, Arechiga 2013,

What is bridging?

- A bridge is “the environment the teacher creates, the instructional support, and the processes and language that are learnt to the student in the context of approaching a task and developing the abilities to meet it.” (Wilhelm, Baker, & Dube 2001)

Build bridges for language and learning (Chapter 6:119)

- Bridging is “a process of ‘setting up’ the situation to make the child’s entry easy and successful and then gradually pulling back and handing the role to the child as he becomes skilled enough to manage it.” (Bruner, 1983, p. 60)
- Bridging is “providing very explicit and active assistance in handing over expert knowledge that helps students to master new strategies.” (Wilhelm, 2004, p. 37)

Bridging for Language AND Learning

- The bridging process enlarges language capacity and learning possibilities for all our students.

Bridging for Learning

- Effective bridging is providing an appropriate “sequence of supports.”
- a “sequence of supports” implies using one support after the other in an orderly flow that affords stepping stone after stepping stone to help students negotiate a particular learning experience from start to finish.

Purpose = Expectations

Establishing a clear purpose for learning content serves as a priming mechanism for new learning and results in increased student understanding of the content.
(Gagne & Briggs, 1974; Hunter, 1976; Mager, 1962)

Objective vs. Purpose statements

- A lesson objective is in the mind of the teacher.
• Establishing purpose refers to the act of carefully communicating the objective to students.

Purpose statements vs. standards

• Purpose statements should focus on what can be accomplished today rather than over several days.
• Standards are meant to be unpacked and unwrapped, not simply posted on the wall.

The Purposeful Classroom, Fisher & Frey, 2011

Setting Purpose in a primary classroom (Look for both the clarity and context of setting purpose)

□ **Clarity: What am I asking students to do?**
  □ Provide clear goals and structures for each task.
  □ Explain the key steps and give examples.
  □ Show students what success will look like.

□ **Context: Why is this important?**
  □ Determine the “why” of your lesson.
  □ Help students connect what they’re learning to their own lives.
  □ RELEVANCE
Purpose and Gradual Release of Responsibility (Frey and Fisher)

- Focus Lesson (teacher)
  - Sets clear purpose for essential learning.
  - Provides direct instruction related to content and/or processes.
  - Models thinking to make it visible for students.
- Guided Instruction (teacher and students)
  - Checks for understanding; works with students in group settings
- Productive Group Work (student to student)
  - Collaborates; asks questions; shares thinking
- Independent Learning (student)

Step inside a primary and intermediate classroom

- Notice the clarity of purpose and strategies for unpacking academic vocabulary?

- What does explicit demonstration look like?

- Why is demonstration so critical to an ELLs understanding?

Bridging for Language

- Bridging for language can be thought of as a linguistic scaffold to bolster linguistic output.
- Examples: Paraphrasing, clarifying, recasting, providing language support structures, etc.
Facilitation is key in bridging for language. The teacher provides a supportive context so that students can attain higher levels of cognitive and language proficiency.

Content and language

- Learning is based in language.
- What are the linguistic demands of the task? (Vocabulary, language structure and/or language function?)

Bridging for Language – Determining the linguistic needs and providing supports

- All learning involves language – students use language to think.
- Vocabulary – across all content domains specialized – meaning is altered by the context (ie. tissue, face, rod, cone)
- technical – single definition, used in one discipline (ie. foreshadowing, vertices, saxophone, digestive)

Bridging for Language – Determining the linguistic needs and providing supports

- Structure
- Grammar and syntax rules,
- Signal words,
- Sentence frames for scaffolding language use,
- Idiomatic expressions

Sentence frames for scaffolding language use

- Some spiders ________, but all spiders ________ to describe information found in the text.
- Present both sides of an argument to a peer using the frame “On the one hand, _________. But on the other hand, ________.”

Language Function

- Verbs used in classroom interactions.
- Common language functions used in school contexts: Express an opinion, describe, summarize, persuade, question, inform, predict, sequence, disagree, debate, evaluate, justify, etc.

Step inside an intermediate classroom

- Where is the teacher bridging for the students’ language? Does the support help the student with a language function, language structure or vocabulary?
Bibliography


Wilhelm, J. D. (2004). Reading is seeing: learning to visualize scenes, characters, ideas, and text worlds to improve comprehension and reflective reading. New York: Scholastic.