This is a chapter excerpt from Guilford Publications.
Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction,
Diane M. Barone, Marla H. Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright © 2005.

Chapter 3

DEVELOPING LITERACY AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

> I hate English! Mei Mei said in her head in Chinese. . . . In New York in school, everything happened in English. Such a lonely language. Each letter stands alone and makes its own noise. Not like Chinese.
>
> —LEVINE (1989), *I Hate English!*

Mei Mei, like millions of English language learners (ELLs) across the United States, comes to a new school environment in which a new language—English—is spoken. Like Jim in *Will I Have a Friend?* (Cohen, 1967), ELL children are also looking for friends at their new schools—and, in their cases, friends who share a common language with them. In many situations, it may be relatively difficult for an ELL child to find a friend who speaks the same language.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2002), between 2001 and 2002 the total K–12 enrollment growth was 12%, whereas for students with limited English proficiency (LEP), the enrollment growth was 95%. In 16 states, there was more than 200% enrollment growth for LEP students between 1992 and 2002. In addition, between 2001 and 2002, the K–12 total enrollment growth for the three states with the largest K–12 enrollments—California (6.2 million), Texas (4.2 million), and New York (2.9 million)—was 10.5%, 17.6%, and –5.3%, respectively. The LEP students' enrollment growth in the three states, however, was 40.2%, 81.3%, and 44.3%, respectively. In these three states, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, Hmong, and Korean are common native languages of LEP students.

Across U.S. schools, additional support for LEP students varies from self-contained bilingual instruction to self-contained English as a second language (ESL) instruction. Some LEP students receive pull-out ESL instruction, while others get push-in ESL instruction. The nature of the support for ELL children is affected by such factors as politics (e.g., Proposition 227 in California and Proposition 203 in Arizona; Gutierrez et al., 2002), budgetary cuts, the rapidly increasing number of ELL children with varied native languages, and the limited number of teachers who are prepared in the theories and pedagogy of teaching ELL children. It

is likely that teaching the majority of ELL children, and in particular teaching them to be literate in English, has already or will soon become the responsibility of teachers in mainstream classrooms (Au, 2002; Neufeld & Fitzgerald, 2001).

Linguistic, Social, and Academic Challenges for ELL Children

What Do These Challenges Mean for ELL Children?

One may argue that all young children coming to school for the first time face the linguistic, social, and academic challenges that ELL children do. The challenges that ELL children experience, however, are unique. For many ELLs, the school environment may be the first place in which they are totally immersed in English with the absence of a native language. This excessive and sudden exposure to a new language can be frightening to young children. (We suggest to teachers of ELLs, "Just imagine that you, an adult, are in a place where an unfamiliar language is spoken and you are expected to understand it.") Furthermore, ELL children are expected and pressured to master, in a short period of time, the spoken English language, which native English-speaking children have taken years to develop (Ashworth & Wakefield, 1994). At school, ELL children must learn to speak *and* write a whole new language whereas their native English-speaking peers come to school to practice and improve their spoken English, as well as to learn the written language.

Although both ELL children and native English-speaking children make adjustments in order to become part of a new classroom community, the process of ELL children's becoming socially accepted by their peers is further complicated by their LEP status. Tabors (1997) has described this process as a "double bind" (p. 35). In other words, in order to be socially accepted by his or her English-speaking peers, an ELL child must be proficient in English and be able to communicate with his or her peers in English. In the meantime, the ELL child can develop his or her English proficiency *only* through communicating with his or her English-speaking peers. To put this another way, in order to communicate with peers, the ELL child needs to be accepted by his or her peers—and vice versa.

The academic challenges ELLs face are even more overwhelming. On top of trying to become part of a new classroom community, and learning to read and write in English (which is a new language to them), ELL children are also using English to learn in various content subjects. In other words, these children are expected to develop academic language while developing their communicative language. Cummins (1986) has referred to communicative language as *basic interpersonal communicative skills* (BICS) and academic language as *cognitive academic language proficiency* (CALP). BICS usually take ELL children 2–3 years to develop, while CALP requires 5–7 years for children to develop. The reason for this time difference is that children are usually exposed to a larger amount of communicative language than of academic language, both at school and at home. Some examples of BICS are talking with peers on the playground and understanding classroom routines. Examples of

CALP include responding to a book that has been read and presenting a research report.

What Do These Challenges Mean for Teachers?

The linguistic, social, and academic challenges that ELL children face during their first few years of schooling are interrelated, complex, and overwhelming. Research has indicated that ELL children follow patterns and processes of language and literacy development similar to those of their native English-speaking peers, and that helpful instructional strategies for native English-speaking children can also be effective for ELL children (Barone, 1996; Freeman & Freeman, 2000; Hudelson & Serna, 2002; Perez, 1998). The unique linguistic, social, and academic challenges for ELL children, however, complicate these patterns and processes, and teachers need to take these challenges into consideration during literacy instruction for these children. Furthermore, teachers need to be knowledgeable about beginning stages of ELL children's language development. Figure 3.1 provides an overview of this development and can be used as an assessment form.

Coming to Know ELL Children

In order for teachers to become acquainted with children from backgrounds different from their own, Nieto (2002) suggests that teachers "need to make a commitment to become *students of their students*" (p. 217; emphasis in original). What this means is that teachers must learn about their students' cultural, linguistic, and academic backgrounds. Although most schools require parents of ELLs to complete a home language survey that includes children's native language and the medium of communication at home, the survey often fails to provide classroom teachers with information that is unique to ELL children. For example, two children who both speak Chinese, but in two different dialects, will have literally no common language to communicate with each other. If their teacher has learned only from the survey that both children speak Chinese, the teacher may not understand why these two children do not talk to each other in the classroom. Figure 3.2 lists the areas about ELL children's backgrounds that are often not included in a home language survey. Information about siblings and friends, for example, may come in handy when teachers are looking for someone who can translate. Furthermore, knowledge of an ELL child's native language—in particular, the similarities and differences between English and the native language—can help a teacher understand why the child has difficulty with certain aspects of oral and written English language (Cary, 2000).

According to Cummins's (1989) *interdependence hypothesis*, to the extent that a child's native language and English share some underlying similarities, skills and strategies related to the native language can be transferred to learning in English, although the degree of transference will vary across different languages. For example, if a Spanish-speaking ELL child has mastered concepts about print in Spanish (an alphabetic language), he or she will probably grasp these concepts in English

FIGURE 3.1
Beginning Stages of Language Development

Name ____ Date _______________

Silent/nonverbal stage

____ Using gestures and body language

Early production stage

____ Using telegraphic speech ("Water" for "I want to drink some water")

____ Combining words ("I water now" for "I want to drink some water now")

____ Using formulaic speech ("I am fine" in response to "How are you today?")

____ Using simple sentences to express basic needs and wishes ("I want to go to the movie")

____ Understanding simple commands

From *Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction* by Diane M. Barone, Marla H. Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright 2005 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this figure is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

FIGURE 3.2
ELL Parent Survey

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Student name in English: ____________________

Student name in native language: ____________________

Native language: ____________________

Dialect of native language: ____________________

Student age and birth date: ____________________

Preschool experiences

In home country: ____________________

In United States: ____________________

Grade levels of siblings: ____________________

Grade levels of friends: ____________________

Favorite things (e.g., food, sports, etc.): ____________________

____

Holidays celebrated: ____________________

ORAL LANGUAGE

Fluency in native language

____ Using telegraphic speech
____ Combining words
____ Using formulaic speech
____ Using simple sentences to express basic needs and wishes
____ Understanding simple commands
____ Using productive language

Fluency in English

____ Using telegraphic speech
____ Combining words
____ Using formulaic speech
____ Using simple sentences to express basic needs and wishes
____ Understanding simple commands

WRITTEN LANGUAGE

Literacy experience in native language

____ Being read to
____ Understanding of concepts about print
____ "Pretend" reading
____ Songs, chants, nursery rhymes
____ Conventional reading
____ Enjoyment of reading
____ Drawing pictures and scribbling
____ Writing own name
____ Writing words to partially match a picture
____ Writing words to completely match a picture
____ Writing only words
____ Enjoyment of writing

Literacy experience in English

____ Being read to
____ Understanding of concepts about print
____ "Pretend" reading
____ Songs, chants, nursery rhymes
____ Conventional reading
____ Enjoyment of reading
____ Drawing pictures and scribbling
____ Writing own name
____ Writing words to partially match a picture
____ Writing words to completely match a picture
____ Writing only words
____ Enjoyment of writing

From *Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction* by Diane M. Barone, Marla H. Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright 2005 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this figure is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

more easily than a Japanese-speaking ELL child will, because Japanese is a nonalphabetic language and does not follow the same directionality.

Learning about an ELL child's native language can start with the child's parents. Parents often appreciate a teacher's efforts to learn about their native language, which results in additional respect for the teacher (International Reading Association [IRA], 2001). Community members and international students in nearby universities and colleges can also be resources. Still other sources of information about ELL children's native languages are children's books written in one or several native languages. A website, the Center for the Study of Books in Spanish for Children and Adolescents at (*www.csusm.edu/campus_centers/csb*), provides information on children's books written in Spanish and in both English and Spanish. *The Usborne First Thousand Words in Japanese* (Amery & Cartwright, 1995) provides some background knowledge about Japanese. *Hu Is a Tiger: An Introduction to Chinese Writing* (Goldstein, 1995) describes the Chinese writing system and provides some examples of Chinese characters. In *Table, Chair, Bear: A Book in Many Languages* (Feder, 1995), accompanying an English label for an object on each page are the corresponding labels in 12 different languages (i.e., Korean, French, Arabic, Vietnamese, Japanese, Portuguese, Lao, Spanish, Chinese [Mandarin], Tagalog, Cambodian, and Navajo). *Who Says a Dog Goes Bow-Wow?* (De Zutter, 1993) invites readers to experience saying "Bow-wow" in 10 different languages. Finally, with a click of a mouse, teachers can gain access to various native languages on the Internet. One interesting and useful website is the Southern California Multi-Language Station (*www.kscitv.com*). Selecting 1 of the 14 languages on the homepage, readers will be able to read a description of a TV show in English and in a native language.

Learning about ELL children's native languages also allows teachers to experience the discomfort, anxiety, frustration, or lack of self-confidence that these children go through when they come to a school where English is the only language spoken. To sample these feelings, teachers can read the short paragraph in Figure 3.3 that is written in English and translated into Chinese; they can then jot down the similarities and differences they notice between English and Chinese.

Creating a Nonthreatening, Language- and Print-Rich Classroom Environment

Welcoming ELL Children

Creating a nonthreatening classroom environment (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) starts with a teacher's smile and interest in ELL children and their native languages. Importantly, on the first day of the school, the teacher welcomes all children and their parents with a smile, and pays close attention to the conversation in a native language between an ELL child and an adult or adults. Even though the teacher may not understand a word in such a conversation, paying attention to their communication (rather than frowning and walking away from the child and adults) sends a powerful message: The teacher cares about and respects each child, shows an inter-

FIGURE 3.3
Learning about Chinese

English:

Mei Mei, like millions of English language learners (ELLs) across the United States, comes to a new school environment in which a new language—English—is spoken. Like Jim in *Will I Have a Friend?* (Cohen, 1967), ELL children are also looking for friends at their new schools—and, in their cases, friends who share a common language with them. In many situations, it may be relatively difficult for an ELL child to find a friend who speaks the same language.

Chinese:

像成千上萬在美國學習英語的孩子, 美美來到一個新學校環境裡, 學習一種新語言--英語。像我會有一個朋友嗎? 一書中的吉姆 (Cohen, 1967), 學習英語的孩子也想要在他們的新學校裡尋找朋友。對他們來講, 他們要尋找會講同樣母語的朋友。在許多情況下, 他們也許相對地不容易找到講同樣母語的朋友。

Similarities:

Differences:

From *Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction* by Diane M. Barone, Marla H, Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright 2005 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this figure is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

est in the language that the child is able to speak, and thus provides a welcoming environment!

In addition to welcoming smiles, a classroom needs to be an environment that is not totally unfamiliar and strange to ELL children. Many parents of young ELL children have noted that during the first few months of the school year, their children often feel lost and afraid, because they have lost control of the world that is familiar to them. This unfamiliarity can result from the absence of native languages, the massive presence of the English language, unknown classmates, and complicated classroom routines. To create a relatively familiar classroom environment for ELL children, teachers can ask parents to bring print materials or environmental print in a native language (e.g., menus, books, newspapers), as well as photos about the children's life experiences (e.g., family gatherings) or pictures reminiscent of the children's home countries or cultural experiences (e.g., holiday celebrations). All of these materials are posted around the classroom. Such materials not only help bring ELL children's familiar world to the classroom, but also provide native English-speaking children in the classroom with opportunities to learn about other cultures and languages (Au, 2002).

For some ELL children, a familiar world can exist only when they see their familiar objects. A teacher may need to allow an ELL child to bring an object (e.g., a stuffed animal, a small birthday present) that comforts him or her (in the same way that a cozy blanket makes a young child not afraid during the night). This special object may also become a faithful listener for the ELL child when he or she wants to speak a native language and later to practice speaking English. Each child's object can become the first show-and-tell item that holds special meaning.

Developing a Language- and Print-Rich Classroom

A nonthreatening classroom does not exclude the presence of language and print in both English and native languages. A language- and print-rich classroom provides ELL children with opportunities to become comfortable and familiar with English, and to explore its functions and conventions (which may share similarities with a native language). To create a language- and print-rich environment, teachers need to start at a personal level and then move on to a more academic level. Here are several suggestions.

- Paste a picture of each child in the classroom next to the child's name label on the desk. At the beginning of the school year, English names do not make much sense to ELL children, but pictures do.
- Post the first names of all children on the wall, and avoid last names. In some languages (e.g., Chinese, Korean), a family name or surname is not called a *last* name, as in English; it is written before the first name. It would be confusing to ELL children if both the last name and the first name of each child were listed. Alphabetize first names, so that the names can provide a point of reference while teaching letter names and sounds of the alphabet. Also, paste each child's picture next to his or her first name.

• Give each student a name tag to wear, so that all children can learn their peers' names. Ask parents to write ELL children's names in their native languages below or above their English names, if the native and English names differ.

• Label the classroom, but do not overwhelm ELL children. Start with the most important words that ELL children need to know in order to survive the classroom routines (e.g., *desk*, *table*, *book*, *pencil*, and *crayon*). Introduce five labels per week, and review old labels frequently as new labels are introduced. Create a word wall for the labels. For each English label on the word wall, include as many equivalents in children's native languages as possible (see Figure 3.4 for one set of examples). These help bring familiarity to the classroom and may also help children better understand English labels if they have mastered sight words in a native language.

• Decorate the classroom with children's writing samples. Post book jackets of high-quality children's literature. Have books of varied topics and interests accessible to students throughout the classroom, not just in the library area.

• Most important of all, keep in mind that a language- and print-rich classroom is an environment where every child is encouraged to interact with peers, and to write, read, listen to, and evaluate various texts.

Familiarizing ELL Children with the Classroom Routine

A nonthreatening, language- and print-rich classroom is also characterized by children's familiarity with classroom routines. The classroom routines in U.S. schools are not always similar to those in ELL children's preschools or schools in their home countries. Even if the children were born in the United States, their parents may have described their own experiences with school routines in their home countries to the children, who thus may not know about classroom routines in U.S. schools.

FIGURE 3.4. An English label with labels in children's native languages on the word wall.

Becoming familiar with classroom routines is crucial to ELL children's participation in various language and literacy events.

Many teachers in kindergarten classrooms use a combination of pictures and words to display the daily schedule on a board or in a pocket chart. Displaying the daily schedule is not enough, however. Teachers need to draw children's attention to how the class moves from one activity to another as described on the schedule. During the first several weeks of the school year, Cindy Chon explained her schedule to her kindergartners, half of whom were non-English-proficient. The daily schedule was displayed in the pocket chart, and there was a clock next to the schedule. For each activity, Mrs. Chon displayed a card giving the time for that activity (e.g., 8:10–8:25), a card with a picture of the activity (e.g., a calendar or reading a book), and a card with the word for the activity (e.g., *calendar*). Following is some of her discussion with her students:

MRS. CHON: Good morning, boys and girls! It is 8:10 (*pointing at the clock and then the 8:10–8:25 card*). It is our calendar time (*pointing at the calendar next to the board, and holding up the appropriate picture card and word from the pocket chart*). [The class then engaged in the calendar time activity.]

MRS. CHON: (*After the class finished the activity*) Now we are finished with our calendar time (*pointing at the calendar, holding up the picture and word cards, and turning the cards over*). It is 8:25 (*pointing at the clock and the 8:25–8:50 card*). It's our read-aloud time (*holding up the book to be read, together with the appropriate picture and word cards from the pocket chart*). [The class then engaged in the read-aloud activity.]

MRS. CHON: (*At the end of the day*) Who remembers what we learned first today? (*Setting the clock to 8:10 and pointing at the clock; some children raised their hands to volunteer.*) José [a beginning ELL child], who is your friend? [Mrs. Chon always asked two children to come up to arrange the cards for the schedule.]

JOSÉ: Lan [another beginning ELL child].

MRS. CHON: Good! (*Talking to both José and Lan*) What did we do at 8:10 (*pointing at the clock*)?

JOSÉ AND LAN: (*Turning over the picture card of a calendar and the word card*)

MRS. CHON: What did we do?

JOSÉ: (*Pointing at the calendar*)

MRS. CHON: (*To Lan*) We had calendar time, right (*pointing at the calendar*)?

LAN: (*Nodding his head*) Ca-ca.

MRS. CHON: Calendar. At 8:10, we had our calendar time (*pointing again at the clock, the calendar, the time card, and the word card*).

In this example, Mrs. Chon not only helped children learn about the daily routines of her classroom, but also invited ELL children to practice oral language and

interact with print. Familiarizing children with the routines in Mrs. Chon's classroom became a language and literacy activity for the children.

Providing Comprehensible Input in Oral and Written Language

When teachers use comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985) during instruction and communication with ELL children, they adjust their speech to the level that ELL children can understand. Teachers also adjust the difficulty level of a written text so that ELL children can comprehend the text.

Oral Language

Slowing Down Speech

The most important way for teachers to provide ELL children with comprehensible input is to slow down their speech (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000). Teachers who are native English speakers seldom realize how fast their speech is. The rate of speech that seems normal to native English speakers may be considered too fast by ELL children, who may just hear a series of sounds. As Mei Mei in *I Hate English!* (Levine, 1989) describes, "Each letter stands alone and makes its own noise. Not like Chinese." Teachers can slow down their speech by enunciating each word clearly and by repeating key words and sentences. It is especially important for teachers to slow down their speech when explaining and providing directions, because how much ELL children understand what teachers have said directly affects their performance. Teachers may increase the speed of their speech as their ELL children's proficiency level increases. Although speech at a reduced rate is comprehensible input, ELL children also need to be exposed to English at a normal rate, which is more natural and authentic. Teachers can achieve a balance of slowed speech and authentic language by speaking at a normal rate and then at a slowed rate for beginning ELL children. When repeating speech at a slowed rate, teachers include key words and phrases, if necessary.

Using Objects, Pictures, and Gestures

In addition to slowing down their speech, teachers can use objects, pictures, and gestures to accompany their talk (Cary, 2000). For example, while going through her daily routine for calendar time, Mrs. Chon frequently referred to objects. She pointed at the clock and the calendar while saying, "It is 8:10. It is our calendar time." Referring to objects can also help ELL children understand a concept that is difficult to explain, even with slowed speech. For example, in helping ELL children grasp the concepts of *smooth* and *rough*, teachers may ask children to feel the surface of a desk while saying "smooth," and to feel the carpet while saying "rough." Although not all objects can be available to accompany speech, teachers can use

pictures. A picture of snow-covered mountains provides some background information about snow for ELL children from countries with warm climates.

In a similar way, gestures add clarity to speech. For example, a teacher can make a sad face to show children what the word *sad* means, or use *total physical response* (TPR; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) to show children various behaviors related to literacy activities throughout the day. Telling an ELL child to read a book silently may be confusing. If the teacher opens a book and uses TPR to demonstrate the act of reading silently, an ELL child will have a better chance of understanding how to follow the teacher's direction. Similarly, while saying, "Go to the writing center," the teacher demonstrates the command by actually walking to the writing center.

Avoiding Idioms

Teachers' speech that is comprehensible to ELL children is also free of idioms (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Idioms are often culturally bound and difficult for ELL children to understand. For example, few native English speakers can explain why the idiom "easy as pie" is used to describe easiness, when making a pie is actually not easy for many people. In many other cultures, the idioms similar to "easy as pie" seem to make more sense. In Thai, easiness is expressed by "easy as peeling a banana," and in Chinese by "easy as turning your hands." In classrooms with ELL children, teachers should avoid using idioms as much as possible.

Using Simple Commands

Another way to make speech comprehensible is to use simple commands rather than requests. The request "Can you please open your book?" is confusing to ELL children, because the request is in the form of a question. Children respond to the request with a "yes" or "no" rather than performing the act of opening a book. If the simple command "Please open your book" is used, children will not be confused.

Written Language

Comprehensible input in a second language for ELL children, as Krashen (1993) has noted, must also be provided in written language. A text that is comprehensible to ELL children contains language and content/concepts that are not overwhelming to these children. For example, *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes* (Hoban, 1986) has pictures of various shapes that children see in their environments (e.g., a chair and a manhole cover), but there is not one word of English in the book. Another book, *The Shapes of Things* (Dodds, 1994) is also about shapes, but it has several clauses on one page: "A square is just a square, until you add a roof, two windows and a door, then it's much, much more!" Although both books focus on the concept of shapes, the second book, *The Shapes of Things*, will be more overwhelming and at times threatening to an ELL child than the first book, *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes*.

In providing comprehensible input, teachers also need to take into consideration ELL children's understandings of the concepts discussed in books. Although

some concepts (e.g., colors) are universal, others are culturally bound. A U.S. breakfast includes food ranging from cold cereals to hot cereals to eggs and bacon. A breakfast can be cooked or not cooked. In other parts of the world, like in China, everything for a breakfast, such as soy milk, porridge, and steamed or baked buns, is cooked. So the concept of *breakfast* in English may entail types of food and methods of preparation different from those in Chinese. Given the culturally specific nature of certain concepts, a text whose language is comprehensible to ELL children can still be difficult for them to understand. Taking the issues of both language and content/concepts into consideration, Freeman and Freeman (2000) and Gibbons (2002) suggest that teachers need to provide students with books and other reading materials that are predictable, familiar, and interesting; that include high-quality illustrations or other visual aids; that integrate content and language; and that provide authentic language.

Predictability

A predictable text has repetitive or cumulative patterns, and often rhyme and rhythm as well. When ELL children are read a predictable text, they are exposed to the same linguistic pattern multiple times. For example, in *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin, 1967), children hear and see the linguistic pattern "[adjective(s)] + [name of an animal], what do you see?" on every page. Their increasing familiarity with this recurring linguistic pattern is more likely to allow them to join in with the teacher in shared reading of the text. A predictable text also provides ELL children with a sense of security, as they can anticipate what types of sentences they are going to hear and see on the following pages.

Familiarity

The predictability of a book's language increases its familiarity to children. Other aspects of a book's familiarity come from its content or concepts. As mentioned earlier, content/concepts are often culturally bound, and a book whose concepts are familiar to native English-speaking children may seem strange to ELL children. For example, in *The Mouse Mess* (Riley, 1997), the foods the mouse ate—cornflakes, syrup, cheese, and juice—may be unfamiliar to ELL children from Asian countries, where mice often eat rice. To increase the familiarity of a book, teachers need to be aware of ELL children's prior knowledge, and to supplement this knowledge if children lack information on the content or concepts presented in the book. The following are different types of books that may bring familiarity to ELL children.

- *Bilingual books*. Children's native language helps make an unfamiliar book written in English familiar to them. *In My Family/En Mi Familia* (Garza, 1996), written in both English and Spanish, adds familiarity to the text through Spanish and through descriptions of family events similar to those Spanish-speaking children have experienced.

• *Books reflecting native cultures*. In many cultures, there are folktales and other stories similar to those in U.S. English culture. If children are exposed to books in English that tell stories reflecting their native cultures before they are read the English-culture versions of the same stories, they may feel less intimidated, because they have some prior knowledge about the stories. Some examples of these books are *Lon Po Po: A Real Red Riding Hood Story from China* (Young, 1989) and *The Three Little Javelinas* (Lowell, 1992).

• *Books with environmental print*. *Miss Bindergarten Stays Home from Kindergarten* (Slate, 2000) includes many types of environmental print that children see in their own classroom, such as children's name tags, labels for the cubbies, and words on the bulletin board.

• *Books about survival*. When books describe situations similar to those that children may have been going through themselves (e.g., going to kindergarten, going to a doctor's office, and learning a new language), they may be interested in finding out how the characters in the book deal with the situations (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002). For example, Slate's (1996) *Miss Bindergarten Gets Ready for Kindergarten* describes how the kindergarten children and Miss Bindergarten are getting ready for their first day of class: "Adam Krupp wakes up. Brenda Heath brushes her teeth. . . . Miss Bindergarten gets ready for kindergarten."

• *Books adapted from children's TV shows and movies*. Although some books based on children's TV shows or movies may be above ELL children's English proficiency levels, the illustrations in the books mostly resemble what they have seen in the TV or movie sources. This prior experience increases the familiarity of these books. Having TV- and movie-based books available to ELL children motivates them to interact with print (see Table 3.1 for a list of such books).

• *Books with the same concept/theme*. Books with the same concept (e.g., counting, weather) or the same theme (e.g., good vs. evil, as in three little pigs fighting a bad wolf) increase familiarity for children, thus helping them focus on meanings rather than linguistic features of the books (Freeman & Freeman, 2000). Same-theme books can be used during read-aloud, shared reading, guided reading, and other reading activities.

• *Books written by the same author*. After children have read several books by the same author, they become relatively familiar with the storylines, the linguistic patterns, and the style of illustrations (Krashen, 1985, 1993). For example, after children have had some prior experiences with *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See* (Martin, 1967), the linguistic patterns in *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* (Martin, 1991) should not be too unfamiliar to them. Children who have been read *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Numeroff, 1985) are more likely to be familiar with the pattern of the storyline in other books by Numeroff, such as *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* (1991), *If You Give a Pig a Pancake* (1998a), *If You Take a Mouse to the Movies* (2000a), and *If You Take a Mouse to School* (2002). In a similar way, after ELL children have read one version of *The Three Little Pigs*, they may have had some prior knowledge about other versions of the same story.

TABLE 3.1. **Books Adapted from Children's TV Shows or Movies**

Beechen, A. (2001). *The wild Thornberrys: The cat's meow.* New York: Simon Spotlight.
Bourgeois, P. (1997). *Franklin's bad day.* Toronto: Kids Can Press.
Bridwell, N. (1988). *Clifford's birthday party.* New York: Scholastic.
Cousins, L. (1999). *Maisy's pool.* Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press.
Daugherty, G. (2002). *Sagwa, the Chinese Siamese cat: Acrobat cats.* New York: Scholastic.
Daveport, A. (1998). *Teletubbies: Go, Po, go!* New York: Scholastic.
Dowdy, L. C. (1997). *Barney goes to the dentist.* New York: Barney.
Egan, C. (2002). *Lilo and Stitch: Say cheese!* New York: Random House.
Gold, R. (2001). *Rugrats: Phil and Lil go to the doctor.* New York: Simon Spotlight.
Mooney, E. S. (2000). *The PowerPuff Girls: Snow-off.* New York: Scholastic.
Muldrow, D. (1999). *Pokemon counting book.* New York: Golden Books.
Redmond, D. (2001). *Bob the builder: Bob's birthday.* New York: Simon Spotlight.
Santomero, A. C. (1998). *Blue's clues: Blue skidoos to the farm.* New York: Simon Spotlight.
Sesame Street. (1997). *Little Ernie's animal friends.* New York: Random House.
Smith, G. (2001). *SpongeBob SquarePants: The good, the bad, and the krabby.* New York: Golden Books.
Snyder, M. (2000). *Dragon tales: Ord and the shining star.* New York: Random House.
Wasserman, R. (2000). *Search for Scooby snacks.* New York: Scholastic.
Wilson, S. (2002). *Dora the explorer: Little star.* New York: Simon Spotlight.
Zoehfeld, K. W. (1997). *Pooh's first day of school.* New York: Disney Press.

Illustrations and Other Visual Aids

Illustrations in books and pictures in environmental print logos provide contextual clues to support the written text. In *Cars! Cars! Cars!* (Maccarone, 1995), an informational book that describes different types of cars, there are two groups of cars on the first page. Under the first group (just one car) is the phrase "One car," and under the second group is the phrase "Two cars." There is "1" written on one car and "2" on another car. On another page, the phrase "Yellow car" is written under a yellow car, and the phrase "Blue car" is under a blue car. The illustrations explain the text, and the text is placed under the illustrations consistently across all pages. The supportive nature of the illustrations, and the consistency in the positional relationship between a picture and a text, help increase the familiarity of the book.

In a storybook, illustrations play an even more important role in helping ELL children comprehend the text. On the first page of *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* (Numeroff, 1985), accompanying the text "If you give a mouse a cookie . . . " is a picture of a boy giving a mouse a cookie. On the second page, the picture of the boy opening the door to his house, and of the mouse running toward the door, supports the text "he's going to ask for a glass of milk." On the third page, the picture of the mouse drinking from a glass of milk while the boy is holding the glass accompanies the text "When you give him the milk . . . " It is important for teachers to keep in mind that not all illustrations support text. Some pictures may look appealing, but they may not be supportive of the text. This can be true for a book with too much text on one page, and with pictures that are not illustrative of the text.

Engagingness

A text that engages children possesses predictability, familiarity, and supportive illustrations/visual aids. More importantly, it invites children to think actively about the story or information while they are being read to or in independent reading. An engaging text has an interesting story plot or information related to children's life experience, invites children to predict and to confirm or disconfirm their predictions, allows them to make connections, and provides them with an opportunity to play with language and have a good laugh. Following are some examples of engaging texts.

- *Text with an interesting plot*. In *If You Take a Mouse to School* (Numeroff, 2002), children are interested in finding out what a mouse will do in a school when he is taken there.
- *Text with interesting information.* In *I Love Trucks!* (Sturges, 1999), simple text with about five words on most pages provides children with information about various trucks they see in their environment.
- *Text allowing for prediction*. In *The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear* (Wood & Wood, 1984), the simple story with one or two sentences on most pages invites children to predict how the mouse will hide the ripe strawberry that he has found from the big hungry bear, and eat it himself.
- *Text allowing for making connections*. In *What Daddies Do Best; What Mommies Do Best* (Numeroff, 1998b) and *What Grandmas Do Best; What Grandpas Do Best* (Numeroff, 2000b), simple text with one sentence on each page helps children think about things that they often do with their parents and grandparents, thus engaging children in making a text-to-self connection.
- *Text with fun language*. Dr. Seuss's books for beginning readers, as well as *Sheep Out to Eat* (Shaw, 1992), *Sheep Trick or Treat* (Shaw, 1997), *Sheep in a Shop* (Shaw, 1991), and other sheep adventure stories by Shaw, allow children to listen to the rhythm and rhyme in each text, and have a good laugh at the silly stories.

Authenticity

An authentic text has language that children hear, see, and read in their environments both at school and at home. While in many states decodable texts have become part of literacy curriculum, teachers need to find texts with authentic and natural language to supplement the literacy curriculum.

In summary, a text that facilitates ELLs' language and literacy development needs to have a good combination of predictability, familiarity, supportive illustrations, engagingness, and authenticity. Teachers can use Figure 3.5 as a guide for selecting books for ELL children, and also to check for a wide range of books in the classroom. The more "Yes" boxes checked, the more books with comprehensible input there are available to use with ELL children.

FIGURE 3.5
Book Selection Guide for ELL Children

	Yes	No
Predictability		
The book has repetitive patterns.		
The book has cumulative patterns.		
The book has rhyme and rhythm.		
Familiarity		
The book is bilingual.		
The book reflects native culture.		
The book has environmental print.		
The book is about survival.		
The book is adapted from a children's TV show or movie.		
The book is one of several books with the same concept or theme.		
The book is one of several books written by the same author.		
Illustrations/visual aids		
The book's illustrations support the written book.		
The book has a consistency in positional relationship between illustration and print.		
Engagingness		
The book has an interesting plot.		
The book has interesting information.		
The book allows for predicting.		
The book allows for making connections.		
The book has fun language.		
Authenticity		
The book has language children hear, see, and read in their natural environments.		

From *Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction* by Diane M. Barone, Marla H. Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright 2005 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this figure is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

Scaffolding ELL Children's Language and Literacy Learning

Like the corresponding section of Chapter 2, this section is organized around language and literacy learning and teaching in the areas of oral language, reading, writing, and word study. All these four areas, however, are integrated into actual teaching and learning (IRA, 2001). Reading aloud, for example, provides ELL children with comprehensible input of the oral language; it helps children become familiar with the linguistic units of the English language (i.e., phonemes, words, phrases, sentences, and connected discourse). Comprehension can be taught through a follow-up activity on the book (e.g., sequencing events), and children can practice writing through their responding to the book read. Finally, word study can focus on identifying words in the book that start with a target sound (e.g., words starting with the /t/ sound). Many activities presented in Chapter 2 can effectively help ELL children with teachers' scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978). When teachers scaffold children's learning, they support children in terms of providing comprehensible input, modeling, and inviting children to participate.

Oral Language

Oral language development is most crucial to ELL children. Whereas their native English-speaking peers have not been pressured to develop oral language, ELL children have to develop both their basic communicative skills and some academic language within a short period of time. These children urgently need extensive exposure to authentic and high-quality oral language within various social settings. The following are some activities that support ELL children's oral language development.

Reading Aloud

Reading aloud benefits ELL children in many of the same ways that it does for native English-speaking children (Cunningham & Allington, 1999; Hadaway et al., 2002; Krashen, 1993). With the unique needs of ELL children, however, teachers' scaffolding is needed. Here are some suggestions:

- Start with a book that provides ELL children with comprehensible input (see Figure 3.5 for the guide on selecting books). Use a big-book version of the book, so that children can see the text and pictures.
- Do a picture walk through the book before reading it. A picture walk allows children to get a sense of what the book is about, thus helping them activate or build their prior knowledge (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).
- Talk about the book conventions (e.g., front cover, author[s], illustrator[s], title page, and back cover) before reading. Read the book with a slowed speech rate during the first reading; then resume a normal rate of speech gradually during subsequent readings. This provides ELL children with an opportunity first to hear English words clearly and later to be exposed to authentic English speech.

• Select a few key content words that are central to the book after the first reading of the book. For example, in the book *Rains* (Kalan, 1978), the word *rains* appears on most pages. Write the word *rains* on a board or on a card for the word wall, and use a highlight tape to highlight the word in the book. Before the second reading of the book, review the word *rains*. During each subsequent reading of the book, highlight other content words, such as *house*, *grass*, *road*, and *car*. Highlight one or two words during each reading of the book. Because these key words are explicitly supported by the illustration of the book, their meanings are relatively easy for children to grasp. While pointing at these words in the book during each reading, also point at the picture that each word represents (e.g., *rains* for the rains across the page).

• Encourage children to make connections between the text and themselves. For children who are at the silent nonverbal stage of language development, give them pictures with phrases or sentences. For example:

- After reading *Rains* several times, model how to respond to the book by holding up a picture with a happy face and the sentence "I like rains" under the face. Also nod the head while saying, "I like rains."
- Next model the response "I don't like rains," by shaking the head and holding up a picture with a not-so-happy face and the sentence "I don't like rains" under the face.
- Then ask two children to come up to the front to demonstrate how they would respond to the book. Each child is asked to pick up a picture with a happy face or with a not-so-happy face. As you say, "I like the rains," nod the head and hold up one child's hand with the picture of a happy face. As you say, "I don't like rains," shake the head and hold up another child's hand with the picture of a not-so-happy face.
- Conduct a guided practice with children, using one of the two picture cards and the body language (i.e., nodding the head or shaking the head).

• For children who are at the early production stage, encourage them to respond to the book. Incomplete sentences or sentences in broken English should be acceptable. If they are shy or feel uncomfortable with sharing in the class, ask them to whisper their responses to a buddy or to you (the teacher).

Acting Out a Story

When children act out a story that has been read to them, they are given a chance to demonstrate their understanding of the story through actions. Acting out is a useful strategy for children who are at the silent/nonverbal and early production stages (Herrell, 2000). For example, during acting out the story *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* (Carle, 1967), each child in a group of seven children is given a card with a day of the week (e.g., *On Monday*) and props (e.g., one apple or two pears). The teacher reads the story from the beginning. When the teacher gets to "On Monday," the first

child with the *On Monday* card says “On Monday” if he or she is verbal, or holds up the card if he or she is at the nonverbal stage. Then he or she acts out eating an apple. The teacher continues by saying, “But he was still hungry.” Each of the remaining six children takes turns saying the words on the card or holds up the card, and then acts out eating the food. The teacher says the rest of the story till the last sentence, “He was a beautiful butterfly!”, which the children in the audience say chorally.

As children’s English proficiency increases, the teacher decreases the number of words he or she says during acting out. Gradually, the teacher changes the strategy from acting out a story to Readers’ Theatre, during which children mostly read their script adapted from a book and do some action. The process should start with predictable or pattern books, as they are easy for the teacher to convert a text to a script and for children to produce sentences with a linguistic pattern. Books like *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* (Martin, 1967), *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* (Martin, 1991), and *There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* (Taback, 1997) are fun for children to use in Readers’ Theatre.

Play Centers

Literacy-related play centers as described in Chapter 2 are crucial for ELL children to develop communicative skills for varying social settings. Teachers start with the centers that are most familiar to children, such as a house and a classroom. They furnish each center with props, and most importantly with print materials (e.g., cereal boxes, newspapers, and utility bills for a house). Teachers encourage parents to bring props and print items unique to ELL children’s cultures and languages, and invite parents to be coplayers in the centers. Utilizing funds of knowledge (Moll, 1994) from the community enriches the multicultural and multilingual experiences of all children in the class, and also makes the classroom a more familiar environment for ELL children. Vukelich, Christie, and Enz (2002) describe different roles that a teacher can take at a play center, ranging from a stage manager who prepares materials for the center to a coplayer who participates in the play with children. For ELLs, it is important that teachers take on the role of coplayers, so that they can model for children how to communicate in a certain setting. In particular, teachers model for children the formulaic sentences used in one particular setting, such as the expressions used in a store: “Do you want the dress or shorts? Do the shorts sound okay?”

Media Center

In a media center, children can listen to the tapes of the books that teachers or others have read to them. Listening to the tape and reading the book allow children to match sounds with words and to learn to read with expression. Encourage children to point at words while listening. A buddy system for children enables them to share or discuss what they have heard. Teachers can include a TV/VCR in the media center, so that children can watch their favorite TV shows or movies. Keeping the mute

button on, so that captions appear on TV, allows children to see the words while they are watching. A computer in the media center will also be very helpful to children (see Chapter 5). Ideally, teachers can have books adapted from TV shows and movies available in the listening center. Children can listen to a book on tape, watch the show or movie from which the book is adapted, and visit the website that features the show or movie. Multiple sources of linguistic input with the same content make the information familiar and predictable.

Assessment of Oral Language

As discussed in Chapter 2, assessment of children's oral language requires the teacher to observe children during various literacy events. For ELL children who are at the silent or nonverbal stage, their oral language output will be none or minimal. However, they are often good observers of how and when language is appropriately used. Xu (1996) documented the literacy experience of a Tagalog-speaking kindergartner, Emily, in an English-only classroom. She used different strategies during the process of becoming proficient in oral language and learning about English written language. Emily's evolving interaction patterns and strategies included (1) the no-response pattern in conjunction with the observing strategy; (2) the active response pattern in conjunction with the observing and imitating strategies; and (3) the active initiation pattern in conjunction with the observing, imitating, and confirming strategies. Therefore, assessment of ELL children's oral language needs to include their behaviors. Figure 3.6 is a form that can be used in this assessment.

Reading

Scholars in the fields of second-language acquisition (Cummins, 2002; Krashen, 1993; Krashen & Terrell, 1983) and of literacy research (Au, 2002; Fitzgerald & Noblit, 1999; Neufeld & Fitzgerald, 2001) have stressed that literacy instruction in a second language should focus on helping children construct meanings, not just on helping them learn the surface linguistic features of the second language. That said, the instructional strategies and materials discussed in Chapter 2 can also be applied to ELL children if their unique needs are taken into consideration.

Using Wordless Books

Wordless books present little linguistic challenge to ELL children, as there is no English print in such books. Children can form their own story based on the illustrations of a wordless book (Flatley & Rutland, 1986). They can tell the story in a native language (which can later be translated into English by parents or community members) or in English, using words, phrases, or sentences (depending on their English proficiency level). Therefore, children at various stages of oral language development can participate in telling a story based on a wordless book (Hadaway et al., 2002; Xu, 2003). See Table 3.2 for a list of wordless books.

FIGURE 3.6
Assessment of ELL Children's Oral Language

Stages and characteristics	Examples	Settings
Silent/nonverbal stage		
Observed behaviors (e.g., nodding, moving closer to the book)		
Observed strategies (e.g., imitating, repeating)		
Early production stage		
Telegraphic speech		
Combining words		
Formulaic speech		
Using simple sentences		
Understanding simple commands		
Productive discourse stage		
Communicative speech (BICS) (e.g., "Can I borrow your black crayon? I can't find mine")		
Academic language (CALP) (e.g., "I like the story because it reminds me of . . . ")		

From *Teaching Early Literacy: Development, Assessment, and Instruction* by Diane M. Barone, Marla H. Mallette, and Shelley Hong Xu. Copyright 2005 by The Guilford Press. Permission to photocopy this figure is granted to purchasers of this book for personal use only (see copyright page for details).

TABLE 3.2. **Wordless Books**

Baker, J. (1991). *Window*. New York: Greenwillow Books.
Bang, M. (1980). *The gray lady and the strawberry snatcher*. New York: Simon & Schuster.
Banyai, I. (1995). *Zoom*. New York: Viking.
Briggs, R. (1978). *The snowman*. New York: Random House.
Carle, E. (1973). *I see a song*. New York: Crowell.
Day, A. (1991). *Good dog, Carl!* New York: Simon & Schuster.
Mercer, M. (1992). *A boy, a dog, and a frog*. New York: Dial Books.
Spier, P. (1982). *Rain*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
Tafuri, N. (1984). *Have you seen my duckling?* New York: Greenwillow Books.
Veitzman, J. P. (1998). *You can't take a balloon into the Metropolitan Museum*. New York: Dial Books.
Veitzman, J. P., & Glasser, R, B. (2000). *You can't take a balloon into the National Gallery*. New York: Dial Books.
Ward, L. (1992). *The silver pony: A story in pictures*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Wiesner, D. (1991). *Tuesday*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
Wiesner, D. (1998). *Fire fall*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books.
Wilson, A. (1999). *Magpie magic: A tale of colorful mischief*. New York: Dial Books.

While children are telling the story, the teacher can write down the words, phrases, or sentences on Post-it Notes and then tape each note on its corresponding page. Or the teacher can type text for each page on a sentence strip and then place each strip under its corresponding page. If a wordless book has been read frequently across a period of time, both the teacher and children may be surprised to learn that the amount of language used in the story has been increased, that words and sentence patterns in the story have become more diverse, and that the quality of the story has been improved. The following example shows how Maria Lopez, a kindergarten teacher, used *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* (Carle, 1971) to facilitate her students' comprehension. Her class included native English-speaking children and ELL children at the nonverbal and beginning stages.

MS. LOPEZ: Boys and girls, today we are going to read this book, *Do You Want to Be My Friend?* (*holding up the book and pointing at the title*).

MING: Book?

MS. LOPEZ: Yeah, this is a book with no words. Let me show you (*turning through the pages for a picture walk*). We are going to make a story. To put words in here, here, here . . . (*referring to the blank space on each page*). Then this book will be like this one (*turning through the pages of the book* The Very Hungry Caterpillar *[Carle, 1967]*).

MING: Oh.

ROSA: Writing the book?

MS. LOPEZ: Yes, we are writing the book. [After reading the title and talking about the author/illustrator, Ms. Lopez read the sentence on the first page

where there is a mouse and partial picture of an animal's tail, "Do you want to be my friend?"] What is this (*referring to the mouse*)?

MIEN: M-M-M-, not like *cat*.

MS. LOPEZ: A mouse. You are right. A mouse does not like a cat (*writing down* mouse *on a Post-it Note and sticking it next to the mouse*). What is this (*referring to the partial picture of an animal's tail*)? (*After waiting for a minute and noting that nobody was responding*) Think (*referring to her head*). What is this?

GARY: A brush.

MS. LOPEZ: Good thinking. It looks like a brush (*writing down* brush *on a Post-it Note and pasting it next to the tail*). Any other answers? (*After seeing Maria touch her hair*) Good thinking. It could be hair, Maria. It looks like hair, a ponytail (*writing down* hair *on a Post-it Note and pasting it next to the tail*). Any more answers? (*Silence*) I'm going to turn the page. Are you ready? (*Turning the page*) Now it is a . . .

DING: Tail.

CLASS: Oh, no!

MS. LOPEZ: It is a tail! It's okay. We had fun guessing (*turning to the previous page and pasting the Post-it Note with* tail *next to the tail*). [After the teacher and the children labeled all the animals during two periods of reading and language arts block time, they went back to the first page to add more sentences.]

MS. LOPEZ: What can we write on this page (*referring to the page where the mouse is asking the horse, represented by its tail, a question*)?

MING: Mouse say this (*referring to the sentence in the speech bubble*, "Do you want to be my friend?")

MS. LOPEZ: You are right. The mouse is saying this sentence (*referring to the sentence*).

TRAVIS: He is asking a question.

MS. LOPEZ: How do you know he is asking a question?

TRAVIS: Here (*referring to the question mark*).

MS. LOPEZ: Good. You are right. A question mark tells you this is a question. We ask a question, but not say a question. What should I write on the Post-it Note?

MING: Mouse ask the question, here (*referring to the question in the speech bubble*).

MS. LOPEZ: Good. The mouse asks the question, "Do you want to be my friend?" Who is he asking?

DIEN: The tail.

MS. LOPEZ: We know whose tail this is (*pointing at the tail*). Right?

TON: Horse.

MS. LOPEZ: Yes. The mouse is asking the horse, "Do you want to be my friend?" (*writing down the sentence on the Post-it Note and pasting it on the page*).

In this example, Ms. Lopez scaffolded her kindergartners' learning in several different ways, and integrated into the read-aloud teaching reading strategies, concepts about print, and vocabulary words. Ms. Lopez created a supportive environment "where ELL students' brainpower is fully acknowledged and activated" (Cummins, 2002, p. viii).

- Ms. Lopez reviewed concepts about print through comparing this book to another one and talking about the question mark.
- Ms. Lopez encouraged her ELL children to participate in the lesson through the activity of labeling the animals.
- Ms. Lopez provided positive and constructive feedback to children's responses through paraphrasing in correct English.
- Ms. Lopez encouraged children to predict, and to confirm or disconfirm their predictions, thus teaching them two important reading strategies—predicting and rereading the previous text.

Using Graphic Organizers

In addition to engaging children in discussing a book, another way to facilitate their comprehension is to use various *graphic organizers*. A graphic organizer visually represents a complete story structure (i.e., a beginning–middle–end cluster) or part of the story structure (e.g., a character map). Both types of organizers provide some support for ELLs to organize their thoughts about the book, thus enhancing their comprehension. When using graphic organizers, teachers need to start with the ones that help organize a whole story (i.e., a beginning–middle–end cluster). With the support of this type of graphic organizer, children have a holistic picture or main idea of the story. Teachers later move on to the graphic organizers that focus on the details of one particular story elements (e.g., a character map or a Venn diagram). These organizers invite children to examine certain story elements in depth. For example, a teacher first uses a beginning–middle–end cluster to help children get the main ideas in *The Three Little Pigs* (Galdone, 1970). Later, the teacher uses a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the first two little pigs with the third little pig, thus allowing children to explore the characters in the story.

Assessment of Reading

To assess ELL children's comprehension through retelling of a book, teachers can use Figures 2.9 and 2.10 in Chapter 2. However, not all ELL children are ready to retell a book they have heard. Children at the silent/nonverbal stage and at the early production stage may provide little information about the book. Being unable to retell the book does not mean that children have not comprehended it, however.

The following are some ways to assess comprehension of ELL children at either the silent/nonverbal or the early production stage.

Retelling the Story in a Native Language. Teachers need to allow some ELL children to retell a story in their native language. A teacher can tape-record a child's retelling, and then ask parents or community members to translate the retelling. Although it is time-consuming to assess children's retelling in a native language, the effort is worthwhile. Through the process, a teacher gets some ideas about a child's comprehension. The child has an opportunity to participate in the assessment just as his or her peers do, and thus gains a sense of self-confidence about his or her own ability to understand the book.

Sequencing the Story Events. Teachers can copy the pictures in a story that represent key events in the book. For example, for the book *The Three Little Pigs* (Galdone, 1970), the pictures of key events include the following: (1) The mother pig sent the three little pigs away; (2) the first little pig built a house of straw; (3) the wolf blew down the house; (4) the second little pig built a house of sticks; (5) the wolf blew down the house; (6) the third little pig built a house of bricks; and (7) the wolf couldn't blow down the house. A teacher can ask an ELL child to sequence these pictures. The teacher can also encourage the ELL child to draw pictures of the events in a story to retell the story. As the child's English proficiency level increases, the teacher writes down short sentences describing the events on sentence strips and asks the child to sequence events.

Retelling about a Character through a Character Map. To assess an ELL child's understanding of a character in the story, a teacher can ask the child to describe the character through a character map with a picture of a character in the middle. The child then draws pictures related to the character. For *The Three Little Pigs* (Galdone, 1970), the picture in the middle of a character map can depict the three little pigs or the wolf, depending on from whose point of view the story is told.

Retelling an Informational Concept through Graphic Organizers. As noted earlier, it is important to introduce informational books to ELL children, even if they are in the beginning stages of English proficiency; it is equally essential to assess their understanding of concepts in such a book. A concept map or a flow chart can be used for the assessment. In a concept map, the teacher draws or writes the concept in the middle. For example, for the book *Shapes, Shapes, Shapes* (Hoban, 1986), the teacher draws a shape (such as a circle) or writes down the word for that shape (*circle*) in the middle. The child draws pictures of objects from the book or from his or her environment that have the shape of a circle. In a flow chart, a child draws pictures to sequence events in a story, to describe the changes that occur (e.g., the life cycle of a butterfly), or to document a cause-and-effect relationship (e.g., the heat causes people to sweat).

Writing

ELLs follow similar patterns and processes in their development of reading and of writing. Like reading instruction, teaching ELL children to write should begin with providing children with opportunities to be immersed in and to interact with print, in English and/or in a native language. Through these experiences with print, children come to understand the functions of writing in various social settings. This foundation is necessary for children to learn about the conventions of written language.

Figures 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 are three writing samples from a Chinese–speaking ELL preschooler, Charlie. In Figure 3.7, he drew a picture of his mom and dad. Later, in Figure 3.8, Charlie copied down the name of a *Pokemon* character, Diglett, to label his drawing of the character. Charlie's teacher, Jane Johnson, often cut out environmental print items from words and pictures related to a theme the children were learning. She introduced the words to the class and talked about the pictures. In the month of May, before the end of the school year, Ms. Johnson introduced the class to Mother's Day in May and Father's Day in June, along with a small box of words and pictures related to both days. On Charlie's card for his dad (see Figure 3.9), Charlie pasted the picture of a heart, the phrase "Happy Father's Day," and the word *love*. Using the word *love*, he copied down the rest of the phrase "I Love You Dad" from one of the environmental print items. The three writing samples illustrate an ELL child's developmental process of writing—that is, from a picture, to a picture with a label, to a picture with a message. Although Charlie copied all the words from the environmental print items, he did use them appropriately in his writing. In addition, the content of Charlie's writings all focused on his life experiences (i.e., his family and his interest in *Pokemon*).

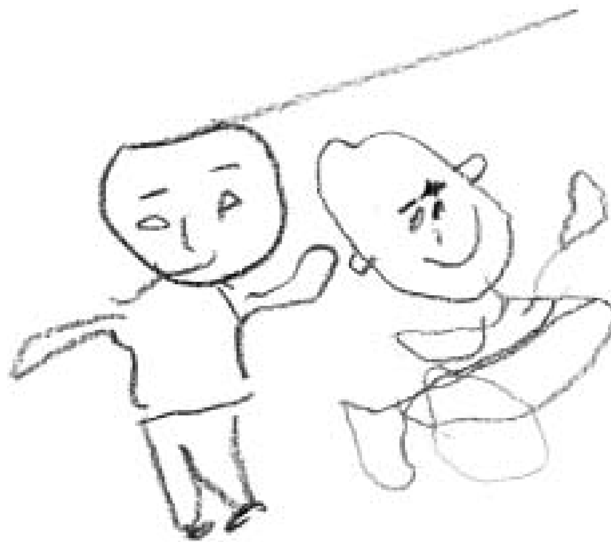

FIGURE 3.7. Charlie's first writing sample: "Mom and Dad."

FIGURE 3.8. Charlie's second writing sample: "Diglett."

FIGURE 3.9. Charlie's third writing sample: "I Love You Dad."

Many of the activities for supporting children's writing development described in Chapter 2, and the assessment form provided there (see Figure 2.17), can be effectively used with ELL children, if teachers keep in mind the following suggestions:

- *Model concepts about print in English*. Not all aspects of concepts about print in English apply to those in children's native languages. For example, as noted earlier, not all languages have the same directionality as the English language. Both Chinese and Japanese can be written from top to bottom and right to left. In addition, in several languages, each word/character has the same shape (e.g., a square or a rectangle) and the same length. See each word in the following sentences, each of which means "The dog barked at an elephant":

Korean: 개 는 코 끼 리 에 짖 었 다
Chinese: 狗在對大象咆哮了

After each character there is a space. Each English word in the sentence "The dog barked at an elephant," however, has a different shape and length. Word boundaries in English may be a difficult concept for children whose language has words that are all roughly the same shape and length. Teachers need to model concepts about print through the activities of language experience approach, shared writing, and interactive writing. Across these activities, the teachers gradually release their responsibility as people who write for the children, who eventually hold a pen and write for themselves.

- *Make print accessible to children*. As discussed earlier, teachers need to create a language- and print-rich classroom for ELL children. Displaying print around the classroom is not enough, and it is important to make print accessible to ELL children—for example, when a teacher writes words related to a theme the children are studying, draws a picture for each word, and puts these words on a word wall so that children can refer to the words during their writing (see Figure 3.10). If a child is looking for a word for his or her journal and is not sure about which word to use, the picture for each word on the word wall provides him or her with some clue to the word. Also placed in a writing center should be boxes of words and pictures cut out of environment print items that have been categorized into different themes/topics (e.g., fruit, meat). If possible, words and pictures related to children's native languages should be included in the boxes.
- *Focus on linguistic patterns*. Written language is different from oral language in terms of its structure, word choice, and decontextualized nature. Like learning to read, learning to write is not an easy task even for native English-speaking children. The additional challenge that ELL children face is that they need to deal with the differences between English and a native language. One of the differences is sentence structure. For example, in Spanish, an adjective modifying a noun comes after the noun. "Red car" in English will be "car red" in Spanish. In Korean, an object in a sentence comes before a verb. "I go to school" in English will be "school I go to" in Korean. Focusing on linguistic patterns in English can be done through explicit

FIGURE 3.10. Farm animal words in Catherine McBride's classroom.

teaching after reading activities, in addition to free journal writing. For example, in *ABC, I Like Me!* (Carlson, 1997), the basic sentence structures are "I am awesome," "I have big dreams," "I love to giggle," and "I can jump and juggle." The teacher can choose one sentence structure at a time to work on with the children. In their journals, children can write a sentence starting with "I am . . . " and draw a picture that matches the sentence. Later, the teacher can move on to more complicated sentence structures with different tenses (e.g., past tense, third-person singular, and present progressive tense).

Word Study

Phonological awareness (e.g., phonemic awareness, rhyming words) and alphabetic knowledge can be more challenging for ELL children than for native English-speaking children, again because of the differences between English and a native language. As discussed earlier in this chapter, teachers' knowledge of ELL children's native languages can be very helpful in figuring out why certain linguistic concepts are hard to some children speaking one particular native language. While doing activities presented in Chapter 2, teachers need to keep in mind the following:

• The phonological system of some languages is very different from that of English. First of all, not all phonemes in English exist in other languages. Two different English phonemes, /b/ and /v/, are the same phoneme in Spanish, /b/. The phoneme /th/ is not in Spanish and Chinese. Moreover, not all languages can be segmented at a phoneme level, as English can. In Japanese and Chinese, for example, the smallest unit of sound is a syllable, not a phoneme. Each word/character is a syllable. The concept of rhyming words is also not universal. In English, the rhyming words *cat*, *sat*, *bat*, *mat*, and *pat* share the same rime (or word family), *-at*. In Chinese, the concept of rhyming words does not exist. The concept of homophones, however, is an important one. The homophones with the syllable *ma* include 媽 (*mother*), 麻 (*linen*), 馬 (*horse*), 螞 (*ant*), and 罵 (*scold*). In addition, the concept of beginning, middle, and ending sounds in an English word may be confusing to some ELL children. For instance, the English word *book* has beginning (/b/), middle (/oo/), and ending (/k/) sounds. Its equivalent in Korean, 책, has a sound for the letter in the upper left position, a sound for the letter in the upper right position, and a sound for the letter at the bottom.

• Alphabet books can help children learn about letter names and sounds (Hadaway et al., 2002). Some alphabet books with too much print, however, will overwhelm ELL children. Alphabet books with simple labels for objects should be used at first. Two examples are *Animals A to Z* (McPhail, 1989), where each page depicts animals and gives their names under the pictures (e.g., *ant*, *armadillo*), and *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits and Vegetables from A to Z* (Ehlert, 1989), where each page depicts a group of fruits and vegetables whose names start with the same letter (e.g., *artichoke*, *avocado*, *apple*, *apricot, asparagus*). Teachers can later introduce children to alphabet books that are more interactive and have some print on each page, such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* (Martin & Archambault, 1989), where each alphabet letter (in alphabetical order) climbs up a coconut tree.

Conclusion: Visiting a Kindergarten Class

Catherine McBride's kindergarten class had 15 non-English-proficient and 5 beginning English speakers. The native language of all 20 of these students was Spanish. Her classroom was language- and print-rich: On display were environmental print, books of various topics and interests, class writings (e.g., a chart on farm animals and a chart on a bird's body parts), students' individual writings, and a science center for children to explore life cycles of different animals (e.g., chickens). Mrs. McBride described how she supported her students in developing English language proficiency and literacy skills while valuing their strengths in Spanish.

At the Beginning of the School Year

"At the beginning of the year, I relied on a great deal of Spanish for clarification and instructions. My kindergartners had not been in a setting like school before. I keep a daily routine, so that the children know what to expect and what is expected of

them. Once the routine is established, I speak to them in English and only clarify in Spanish when necessary. Body language is important as well. For example, if I ask a child to count the days on the calendar, I hand the child the pointer so that the child understands what is being expected of him or her, even if he or she is unsure of all of the words on the calendar. If the child is still unsure, I repeat the request, and I may start counting with him or her or even help him or her point at the calendar. Many times I ask another child or let him or her pick another child to collaborate with on a task.

"The children are always allowed to speak in Spanish, but I often ask them to attempt what they said in English as well, and then I repeat the correct structure as if clarifying, but not correcting. This makes them feel successful that they communicated something in English, and they immediately hear the correct structure.

"My English language development (ELD) lessons at the beginning of the year include school survival skills. I teach the children how to ask questions to take care of their needs, like going to the bathroom, getting a drink of water, getting a pencil, and so on. I use a lot of simple commands in the form of games, like Simon Says, Bingo, and Pair Share to practice verbs and other vocabulary. I use songs and patterned books for repetition of vocabulary and language structures. Repetition in a group seems to be a huge key to getting them comfortable attempting English. They feel like part of the capable group and are more likely to take risks on their own."

Throughout the School Year

"I teach thematically. High-interest themes allow for ongoing lessons using repetitive vocabulary and language structures. Thematic teaching also creates ongoing interests in the subject and lends itself to deeper exploration, which in turn leads to expanded vocabulary and language learning. I have a science center in my room, which has several different purposes. The first is for the children to learn to be responsible for taking care of a pet. The second is for them to learn about the animals and different things related to these animals. Another one is to create a high interest and have something hands-on and meaningful for the children to see, touch, play with, and explore, to increase their realm of experiences. And finally, of course, the idea is to generate language from the children.

"I try to add something new to the science center that goes along with each theme. In the spring, we had an aquarium with caterpillars that the students found (and that I ordered) at our local science store. We talked about caterpillars as a group, and much was discussed excitedly in Spanish. This gave the students a base of understanding, and then I introduced the new vocabulary in English. We created a word wall of 'butterfly words' (and I drew pictures next to the words for reference). We made a KWL chart [see Chapters 6 and 7 for more on these charts], and I brought out a 'special book basket' of butterfly and insect books. I used these books for read-alouds followed by much discussion. The children browse during their free reading time through the book box, and make their own 'butterfly discoveries.' We observed the caterpillars daily and watched them change, grow fat, make chrysalises, and then turn into butterflies.

"I modeled writing and drawing in my journal, and they followed my lead. I put the butterfly aquarium on the journal writing table, so that they could draw the caterpillars in their journals. We wrote a long story about butterflies and how they change during interactive writing [see Figure 3.11], and then made our story into a class big book as well as individual little books to take home. We became 'butterfly experts.' The children brought plants and flowers they picked on the way to school to feed their caterpillars and butterflies. One day we all went outside and sat in a big circle, said goodbye, and set the butterflies free. ELD lessons included structured phrases and sentences about what we knew about butterflies, what we liked, what butterflies have and do, and how we felt about them. The theme with a high interest made the children want to talk about their experiences."

Reflection

"In my teaching, I highly value children's native language, their life experience, and their efforts to learn English. I try to make reference to and to teach cognates. For example, *Mom* is similar to *mamá* in Spanish, and *lion* is similar to *león* in Spanish. Using cognates makes it easier for the children to learn and remember the words in English and Spanish. I also make references to things the children already know, such as language structures. For example, the Spanish *a la playa* can be directly translated as 'to the beach.' I also teach the children how to say in English the phrases they use most frequently in Spanish.

"In my class, the children must never be made to feel ashamed that they do not understand or that their attempts to speak in English are not good enough. They should always feel supported and capable, and a strict rule in my room is that we don't laugh at others or hurt others' feelings. I believe that once children feel they can't do something well, they stop trying.

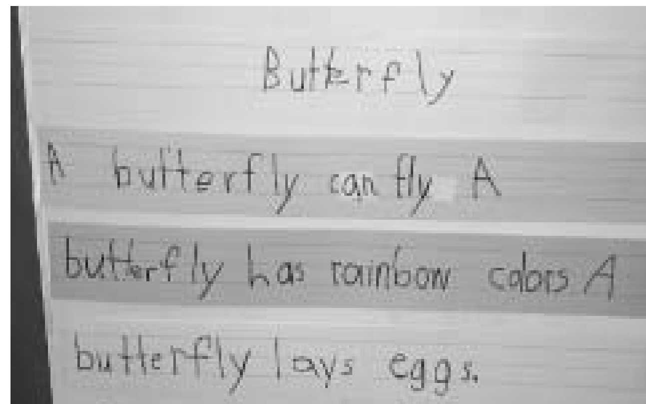

FIGURE 3.11. Interactive writing on butterflies.

"My biggest challenge this year was that my students had no opportunity to interact with English-speaking peers for any part of the academic day. An added challenge was the Open Court Phonics program that I was forced to teach for 45 minutes per day. This was a waste of time, because the content of the program was not comprehensible to my non-English-speaking children at all. I addressed these challenges by using my time very wisely, practicing the flexible teaching methods, and teaching language and literacy through content. I also went to ELD training, and I discussed things with and asked for advice from peers, professors, and administrators. Mostly importantly, I researched effective methods for ELD, and began my master's program in reading in search of ideas to make me a more expert teacher for my ELL children."

Copyright © 2005 The Guilford Press. All rights reserved under International Copyright Convention. No part of this text may be reproduced, transmitted, downloaded, or stored in or introduced into any information storage or retrieval system, in any form or by any means, whether electronic or mechanical, now known or hereinafter invented, without the written permission of The Guilford Press.

Guilford Publications
72 Spring Street
New York, NY 10012
212-431-9800
800-365-7006
www.guilford.com