

THE
ESL/ELL
Teacher's
SURVIVAL GUIDE

*Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools & Activities
for Teaching All Levels*

Second
Edition

Larry Ferlazzo
Katie Hull Sypnieski



J JOSSEY-BASS™
A Wiley Brand

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[Praise for *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide*](#)

[Title Page](#)

[Copyright](#)

[About the Authors](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About the Contributors](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Note](#)

[PART ONE: Getting Started with English Language Learners](#)

[CHAPTER ONE: ELL Instruction: The Big Picture](#)

[ELL Population Growth](#)

[How Are English Language Learners Described?](#)

[Adolescent English Language Learners](#)

[A Primer on ELL Research](#)

[A Quick Tour of ELL Best Practices](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER TWO: ELL Classroom Basics: Building a Positive and Effective Learning Environment](#)

[The First R: Building *Relationships*](#)

[The Second R: *Resources* in the ELL Classroom](#)

[The Third R: Establishing *Routines*](#)

[Notes](#)

PART TWO: Teaching Beginning English Language Learners

CHAPTER THREE: Key Elements of a Curriculum for Beginning ELLs

Key Elements of a Curriculum

Notes

CHAPTER FOUR: Daily Instruction for Beginning ELLs

Picture Word Inductive Model Unit Plan

Notes

PART THREE: Teaching Intermediate English Language Learners

CHAPTER FIVE: Key Elements of a Curriculum for Intermediate ELLs

Key Elements of a Curriculum

Notes

CHAPTER SIX: Daily Instruction for Intermediate ELLs

Designing Thematic Genre Units

A Sample Unit: Problem-Solution

Sample Lesson Plans

Inductive Lesson Plan

Using Text to Generate Analytical Writing Lesson Plan

A Sample Week in a Two-Period Intermediate ELL Class

Notes

PART FOUR: Teaching English Language Learners in the Content Areas

CHAPTER SEVEN: English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom

What Is the Organizing Cycle?

Notes

CHAPTER EIGHT: Teaching Social Studies

Building Relationships with Students

Notes

CHAPTER NINE: Teaching Science

Introduction: Science and Language

Notes

CHAPTER TEN: Teaching Math

Introduction

Challenge: Reading Mathematics Texts

Challenge: Knowledge of Appropriate Academic Vocabulary

Challenge: Participating in Mathematics Conversations

Challenge: Understanding Abstract Concepts

Notes

PART FIVE: Working with Specific Groups of English Language Learners

CHAPTER ELEVEN: Supporting Long-Term English Language Learners

Who Are Long-Term English Language Learners?

How Can We Best Support LTELLs?

How Did Larry and His School Try to Put These Recommendations into Action?

Notes

CHAPTER TWELVE: Working with Elementary ELLs

[Who Are Elementary English Learners?](#)

[Do Elementary English Language Learners Have Different Needs? Does Their Instruction Need to be Different from that of Older English Learners?](#)

[Program Types in Elementary](#)

[The Core Elements of Supportive Instruction for Elementary English Language Learners](#)

[What Does a Model Classroom that is Highly Supportive of Elementary English Learners Look Like?](#)

[What Does a Model Classroom that Is Highly Supportive of Elementary English Learners Sound Like?](#)

[What Does a Model Classroom that Is Highly Supportive of Elementary ELLs Feel Like?](#)

[Instructional Strategies that Support Elementary ELLs](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER THIRTEEN: Teaching Adult ELLs](#)

[The Differences in Teaching English to Adults Versus Children](#)

[How to Foster Success with Adult Learners](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER FOURTEEN: Teaching ELLs with Learning Differences](#)

[Considerations for Further Investigation](#)

[Considerations for Determining Services](#)

[Considerations for Placement/Scheduling](#)

[Resources](#)

[Notes](#)

PART SIX: Further Strategies to Ensure Success

CHAPTER FIFTEEN: Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching

What Is Culturally Responsive and Sustaining Teaching?

The Organizing Cycle

Notes

CHAPTER SIXTEEN: Addressing Additional Opportunities and Challenges

Student Motivation

The Advantages of Being Bilingual or Multilingual Lesson Plan

Social Emotional Learning

Textbook Integration

Error Correction

Limited Access to Educational Technology

Multilevel Classes

Co-Teaching and/or Working with an Aide/Paraprofessional

Classroom Management

Book Selection

Supporting ELL Students with Limited or Interrupted Formal Education (SLIFEs)

Notes

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN: Home Language of ELLs

Seeing Home Language as an Asset

A Mini Lesson on the Value of Home Languages

Research on Home Languages in the Classroom

Turning Bloom's Taxonomy into a Home-Language Framework

[Abandoning English-Only Policies](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER EIGHTEEN: Using Learning Games in the ELL Classroom](#)

[Research Support](#)

[What Are the Qualities of a Good Learning Game?](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER NINETEEN: Assessing English Language Learners](#)

[Assessing ELLs: Key Principles](#)

[Notes](#)

[CHAPTER TWENTY: Reflective Teaching/Professional Development](#)

[The Bread in the Pond](#)

[Why Should We Have an Intentional, Formal Process for Reflecting?](#)

[Why I Began Filming Myself and Why I Continued](#)

[Adopting a Reflective Mindset](#)

[Notes](#)

[Afterword](#)

[Index](#)

[End User License Agreement](#)

List of Illustrations

Chapter 1

[Figure 1.1. BICS and CALP](#)

[Figure 1.2. English Proficiency Level “Labels”](#)

Chapter 2

[Figure 2.1. Four Squares](#)

[Figure 2.2. Teacher Model](#)

[Figure 2.3. Sample Concept Map](#)

Chapter 3

[Figure 3.1 Example of Photo Used in the Picture Word Inductive Model](#)

Chapter 4

[Figure 4.1. Graphic Organizer](#)

Chapter 5

[Figure 5.1. Immigration Word Web](#)

[Figure 5.2. Persuading My Parents Student Sample](#)

Chapter 6

[Figure 6.1. Student Sample of Category Poster for Data Set \(Photo\).](#)

[Figure 6.2. Student Sample of Synthesis Chart Poster \(Photo\).](#)

[Figure 6.3. Teacher Sample of Dissecting the Prompt](#)

Chapter 7

[Figure 7.1. Differentiation Tips Published with permission of Wendi Pillars...](#)

Chapter 9

[Figure 9.1. Percentage of general population \(gray\), ELL \(light green\), or f...](#)

[Figure 9.2. Constructivist Visuals Example Text“Prophase, in which dense ...](#)

[Figure 9.3. Example set of visuals and word bank for Tap and Talk activity. ...](#)

Chapter 12

[Figure 12.1. ELLs in the US](#)

[FIGURE 12.2. What an Elementary Classroom Should Look Like](#)

[FIGURE 12.3. What an Elementary Classroom Should Sound Like](#)

[FIGURE 12.4. What an Elementary Classroom Should Feel Like](#)

Chapter 17

[Figure 17.1. No Food in the Classroom](#)

[Figure 17.2. Diagram: How Much to Integrate the Home Language](#)

[Figure 17.3. Two Tabs in Two Languages](#)

[Figure 17.4. Example of Auto-Translated Subtitles](#)

[Figure 17.5. Online Annotated Text for Comprehension](#)

[Figure 17.6. Handwritten Annotated Text for Comprehension](#)

[Figure 17.7. Handwritten Mind map for Analysis: Example of Translanguaging...](#)

[Figure 17.8. English Spoken Here Sign](#)

[Figure 17.9 No Matter Where You Are From, I'm Glad You're My Student](#)



Bonus Web Content

Companion papers are available online, at www.wiley.com/go/eslsurvivalguide2, on these topics related to teaching english online and around the world:

- Distance Learning
- Teaching English Internationally
- Non Native English Speakers Teaching English
- Teaching Science (from 1st edition)
- Teaching Math (from 1st edition)

Praise for *The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide*

“An engaging, practical, and highly accessible book The authors share strategies that have been proven effective through research as well as their own practice. There is truly something valuable for any teacher, even those who have extensive experience with ESL classes.”

—**PIA WONG**, professor, Bilingual/Multicultural Education, California State University, Sacramento

“This is an invaluable resource for all new and experienced teachers who desire to see their language learning students thrive and achieve at high levels.”

—**DANA DUSBIBER**, classroom teacher with over 30 years of experience working with ELLs

The ESL/ELL Teacher's Survival Guide

**Ready-to-Use Strategies, Tools, &
Activities for Teaching All Levels**

LARRY FERLAZZO AND KATIE HULL SYPNIESKI

SECOND EDITION

 JOSSEY-BASS™
A Wiley Brand

Copyright © 2022 John Wiley & Sons. All rights reserved.

Published by John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Hoboken, New Jersey.

Published simultaneously in Canada.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, scanning, or otherwise, except as permitted under Section 107 or 108 of the 1976 United States Copyright Act, without either the prior written permission of the Publisher, or authorization through payment of the appropriate per-copy fee to the Copyright Clearance Center, Inc., 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, (978) 750-8400, fax (978) 750-4470, or on the web at www.copyright.com.

Requests to the Publisher for permission should be addressed to the Permissions Department, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 111 River Street, Hoboken, NJ 07030, (201) 748-6011, fax (201) 748-6008, or online at <http://www.wiley.com/go/permission>.

Limit of Liability/Disclaimer of Warranty: While the publisher and author have used their best efforts in preparing this book, they make no representations or warranties with respect to the accuracy or completeness of the contents of this book and specifically disclaim any implied warranties of merchantability or fitness for a particular purpose. No warranty may be created or extended by sales representatives or written sales materials. The advice and strategies contained herein may not be suitable for your situation. You should consult with a professional where appropriate. Further, readers should be aware that websites listed in this work may have changed or disappeared between when this work was written and when it is read. Neither the publisher nor authors shall be

liable for any loss of profit or any other commercial damages, including but not limited to special, incidental, consequential, or other damages.

For general information on our other products and services or for technical support, please contact our Customer Care Department within the United States at (800) 762-2974, outside the United States at (317) 572-3993 or fax (317) 572-4002.

Wiley also publishes its books in a variety of electronic formats. Some content that appears in print may not be available in electronic formats. For more information about Wiley products, visit our web site at www.wiley.com.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is Available:

ISBN 9781119550389 (paperback)

ISBN 9781119550426 (ePDF)

ISBN 9781119550419 (ePub)

Cover Design: Wiley

Cover Image: © banyumilistudio/Shutterstock

About the Authors

Larry Ferlazzo teaches English and social studies to English language learners and English-proficient students at Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento, California. He has written, co-authored, or edited 12 books on education.

He has won numerous awards, including the Leadership for a Changing World Award from the Ford Foundation, and was the grand prize winner of the International Reading Association Award for Technology and Reading.

He writes a popular education blog at <http://larryferlazzo.edublogs.org> and writes a weekly teacher advice column for *Education Week*. His articles on education policy regularly appear in *The Washington Post*. In addition, his work has appeared in publications such as *The New York Times*, *ASCD Educational Leadership*, *Social Policy*, and *Language Magazine*.

Ferlazzo was a community organizer for 19 years prior to becoming a public school teacher. He is married and has three children and four grandchildren.

Katie Hull Sypnieski has taught English language learners of all proficiency levels and English-proficient students for 25 years in the Sacramento City Unified School District. She has served as a teaching consultant with the Area 3 Writing Project housed at University of California-Davis for the past 20 years.

She has co-authored three books on teaching ELLs and has co-edited three books on education. She has published articles and instructional videos for *Education Week*. In addition, she has co-authored articles for *Edutopia*, *The*

New York Times Learning Network, and ASCD Educational Leadership.

Sypnieski currently teaches English to English language learners and English-proficient students at Arthur A. Benjamin Health Professions High School in Sacramento, California. She is married and has three children.

Larry and Katie have co-authored two other books on teaching English language learners, *The ELL Teacher's Toolbox* and *Navigating the Common Core with English Language Learners*, both from Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

Acknowledgments

Larry Ferlazzo. I'd like to thank my family—Stacia, Rich, Shea, Ava, Nik, Katie, Karli, Federico and especially, my wife, Jan—for their support. In addition, I need to express appreciation to my co-author, Katie Hull Sypnieski, who has also been a colleague and friend for eighteen years. I would like to thank my many colleagues at Luther Burbank High School, including Principal Jim Peterson, for their assistance over the years. And, probably most important, I'd like to thank the many English language learner students who have made me a better teacher—and a better person.

Katie Hull Sypnieski. I would like to thank all the students I've had over the years for their determination, their creative energy, and for helping me to grow as an educator and as a person. In addition, I am grateful for all of the support I have received from my colleagues, especially Larry Ferlazzo, my co-author, co-teacher, and friend. Finally, to all of my family members, especially my husband, David, and children Drew, Ryan, and Rachel, I want to thank you for supporting me in this process—you are the best!

There are also several people we would both like to thank:

We must offer a big thank-you to Amy Fandrei and Pete Gaughan at Jossey-Bass for their patience and guidance in preparing this book, and to David Powell for his assistance in formatting our manuscript submission.

And, of course, we have to thank the *10* other contributors to this second edition (you can see their complete biographies elsewhere in this book):

Laura Gibbs

Stephen Fleenor

Cindy Garcia

Valentina Gonzalez

Antoinette Perez

Jessica Bell

Tan Huynh

Carol Salva

Jenny Vo

Lorie Hammond

About the Contributors

Nine other educators have made sizable contributions to this second edition.

Laura Gibbs received her PhD in Comparative Literature from UC Berkeley in 1999. She joined the University of Oklahoma faculty where she taught online courses in folklore and mythology; she retired from teaching in 2021 in order to write full-time. She is the author of a translation of *Aesop's Fables* for Oxford University Press, and she is also the author of a free OER book series: *Tiny Tales*, which is available online at LauraGibbs.net.

Stephen Fleenor is an educational consultant in San Antonio, Texas with Seidlitz Education (www.seidlitzeducation.com). Stephen earned a PhD in Developmental Neurobiology from the University of Oxford before teaching high school science in a highly disadvantaged community in San Antonio. His pedagogy developed out of a passion to serve English learners and other at-risk students while spreading his love for science. As a facilitator of professional development and developer of educational materials, he advocates for a growth-minded approach to teaching and learning that encourages and strengthens learners' academic expression.

Cindy Garcia has been a bilingual educator for 15 years and is currently a districtwide specialist for P-6 bilingual/ESL mathematics. She is active on Twitter at @CindyGarciaTX and on her blog (<https://teachingelementaryels.weebly.com/>).

Valentina Gonzalez has more than 20 years of experience teaching and working with multilingual students from around the globe. Her personal experience as an immigrant

from Yugoslavia and language learner fuel her desire to advocate for English learners and support teachers with the best research-based teaching methods. Her work's primary focuses have been on literacy, culture, and language. Valentina is the coauthor of *Reading & Writing with English Learners: A Framework for K-5*.

Antoinette Perez has more than 10 years of experience working with English Language Learners of all levels, including extensive experience with international and adult learners. She has worked in California and Georgia at schools with high percentages of ELs, which motivated her to obtain TEFL certification to teach English abroad. She currently serves as the English Co-Department Chair at Buena High School in Ventura, California where she runs the ELD program and teaches honors and AP English. In another capacity, she instructs online English classes for children and adults. Her dedication to students and ESL instruction has taken her around the world to enrich her ability to connect with students and enhance her professional practice.

Jessica Bell, M.Ed, taught English and ENL for 19 years, serving students from a diverse mix of backgrounds. A SIOP practitioner while in the classroom, she believes all students deserve equitable access to rigorous academic instruction. Jessica has transitioned from the classroom to the EdTech space, helping provide teachers with digital tools to enhance instruction.

Tan Huynh ([@TanKHuynh](#)) is a career teacher specializing in language acquisition. He nerds out on all things related to multilingual students and shares what he has learned from experts, scholars, and master teachers through his writings, podcast, courses, conference, and workshops.

Carol Salva is an international education consultant with elementary, middle and high school teaching experience.

She provides sheltered instruction workshops, coaching and modeling through Seidlitz Education. Carol is the co-author of *Boosting Achievement: Reaching Students with Interrupted or Minimal Education*.

Jenny Vo earned her B.A. in English from Rice University and her M.Ed in Educational Leadership from Lamar University. She has worked with English Learners during all of her 27 years in education, first in Houston Independent School District and then in Katy Independent School District. Jenny recently made the move to International Leadership of Texas and serves as the Houston area EL Coordinator. Jenny has served on the Board of TexTESOL IV for several years and was the 2020-2021 president. She works to advocate for all English learners and enjoys sharing her knowledge and passion with others at local and state conferences. She loves learning from her #PLN on Twitter so feel free to follow her [@JennyVo15](https://twitter.com/JennyVo15).

Introduction

There was a great forest fire—everything was burning and all the animals were scared and didn't know what they could do. A hummingbird, though, went to a lake and got a drop of water. It flew to the fire and dropped the water there, and it kept on going back again. The other animals kept on telling the hummingbird that it was wasting its time, telling it there was no way a little water was going to make a difference. The hummingbird replied, “I'm doing the best I can.”

—Modern ecological parable¹

The hummingbird did its best in the face of many challenges and adversity, and nothing could stop it.

While it would have been ideal for the hummingbird to organize all the animals to join it in fighting the fire, always encouraging the use of that kind of strategy is not the main point of the story or this book. This book is primarily designed to help secondary-level ELL teachers do the best they can in their classrooms (though it does also include a chapter on how to help mainstream educators make their content more accessible to English language learners, too). In addition, the majority of approaches and strategies we discuss can be easily modified for younger ELLs.

This book is primarily written by two committed and experienced educators who have a rich family life outside of school, plan on continuing to teach for years to come, and who are always interested in providing high-quality education to their students without requiring enormous extra work for the teacher. In addition, nine—count ‘em, *nine*—other very experienced educators have contributed

towards making this book nearly twice the size of the first edition!

It is not written by or for teachers who lack awareness of their own limitations and what is needed to stay in education for the long haul.

This book is a careful distillation of selected instructional strategies that have been used successfully by us for years in the classroom.

It is not a laundry list of every ELL teaching method that's been discussed in the literature.

In addition to providing a selective review of ELL teaching methods, this book shares highly regarded research supporting just about everything we suggest.

It is not just speaking from our experience and what we think is good. This book shares numerous specific suggestions about how ELL teachers can use technology to bring a value-added benefit to their language-learning students.

It is not a treatise on how educational technology is the “magic bullet” that is always (or even often) superior to nontech strategies.

This book recognizes that teachers need to deal with standards (we discuss both Common Core and The Next Generation Science Standards), textbooks, and standardized tests. This book also recognizes that not everything always goes according to plan, and includes a lengthy chapter on how to deal with potential problems. This book understands the realities of what work in the classroom world actually is like.

It does not offer a pie-in-the-sky view assuming we operate in an ideal classroom world all the time.

This book emphasizes the importance of learners being co-creators of their education.

It does not encourage the teacher being the “sage on stage.”

The point of this book is not to claim it is the be-all and end-all for ELL teacher professional development. We strongly encourage teachers and their schools to develop ongoing mentor relationships with experienced educator organizations, and we recommend three of them in the Afterword.

This book does not promote the idea that any teacher is an island and only needs a few books and informal professional relationships to reach his full potential.

We hope that you can gain from the second edition of this guide at least as much as we learned from writing it.



Bonus Web Content

The last five chapters are “web-only” and available without any registration required. These include the original chapters on teaching Science and Math that appeared in the first edition. This second edition contains entirely new chapters, but we still believe the original ones can be very helpful to teachers of ELLs. Two of the chapters relate to teaching internationally. We thought that putting them online would increase their accessibility to teachers outside of the United States. The final chapter is about distance learning, and Wiley graciously allowed us to put it freely online in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic (though, we have made some minor changes since then). Numerous Tech Tools supporting the lessons and instructional strategies that we discuss are highlighted throughout this book. In addition, we have a lengthy web page listing links to all the tools we cite, as well as to many others that we did not have space to include. All Exhibits (primarily student handouts) in the book can also be downloaded. Readers can access these resources by going to www.wiley.com/go/eslsurvivalguide2.

Note

1. The story of the hummingbird and the forest fire is from the book *Flight of the Hummingbird: A Parable for the Environment* by Michael Nicoll Yahgulanaas, published in 2008.

PART ONE
Getting Started with
English Language
Learners

CHAPTER ONE

ELL Instruction: The Big Picture

Long ago a wise, old teacher lived in a village near a range of mountains. Climbing the highest of these mountains was considered an important accomplishment, and all the young boys of the village couldn't wait until they were old enough to make the climb on their own.

One night, the wise teacher gathered a group of boys together and said to them, "You have reached the age to take on the challenge. Tomorrow you may all go and climb that mountain with my blessings. Go as far as you can, and when you are tired, turn around and come home. Remember to bring back a twig from the place where you turned around."

The next morning, the boys began the long-awaited climb. A few hours later, one of the boys returned with a piece of buckthorn. The teacher smiled and said, "I can see you made it to the first rockslide. Wonderful!" Later in the afternoon, another boy arrived with a cedar frond. "You made it halfway up! Well done!" remarked the teacher. An hour later another boy returned with a branch of pine, and the teacher said, "Good job. It looks like you made it three-quarters of the way. If you keep trying, next year you will surely reach the top!"

As the sun began to set, the teacher began to worry about the last boy, who still had not returned. Just when the teacher was about to send out a search party, the boy finally returned. He ran to the teacher and held out his hand. His hand was empty, but his eyes sparkled with happiness as he said, "Teacher, there were no trees where I turned around. I saw no twigs, no living things at the very top of the peak, and far away I could see the majestic sun shining off the sea."

The teacher's eyes also sparkled with joy as he proclaimed, "I knew it! When I looked in your eyes I could see that you made it! You have been to the top! It shines in your eyes and sings in your voice! My son, you do not need twigs or branches as prizes of your victory. You have felt the prize in your spirit because you have seen the wonder of the mountain!"¹

This tale describes the satisfaction and joy felt by the boy who reached the mountain's peak and witnessed the compelling view from the top. He didn't return with any physical "prizes" but instead carried the treasures of his journey within himself. The next time he climbs the mountain, he will be motivated from within, not because there are tokens or prizes to be collected.

As educators, we hope all of our students will "see the view from the peak" and will feel compelled to take on many more journeys as they learn and grow. Researcher Stephen Krashen explains how "compelling input" relates to language learning: Compelling means that the input is so interesting you forget that it is in another language. It means you are in a state of "flow."² In flow, the concerns of everyday life and even the sense of self disappear—our sense of time is altered and nothing but the activity itself seems to matter.³

This idea will be reflected throughout this book as we identify and describe research-based instructional strategies and approaches that "compel" students to want to learn English. Compelling input can help students "reach the peak" of acquiring language without seeking external rewards. However, it is ultimately important for students to come to their own conclusions about the value of "reaching the peak." Once students see the value of language learning and become intrinsically motivated to learn English, they

will take the risk and climb that mountain over and over again. Sometimes they will need encouragement and support from us, especially when the peak is obscured by clouds along the way.

This book contains strategies and tools for teachers of English Language Learners to act as guides on this trek up the mountain. We hope it will help you feel prepared and excited about this journey. We know that everyone's trail will be different, and we hope this "survival guide" will serve as a compass rather than a direct map.

In the following subsections we will lay out a big picture of ELL instruction, including statistics on the English language learner population, research on language development, and several ELL instructional best practices. Later chapters will go into more detail on how to implement these big picture research findings and practices in your own classroom.

ELL Population Growth

It is hard to find a school district in this country that doesn't have an English Language Learner population. For teachers in states like Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Washington, it is sometimes hard to find a school or even a classroom without any English language learners. ELL enrollment in K-12 schools increased 28 percent between the 2000-2001 school year and the 2016-2017 school year.⁴ In fact, the US Department of Education estimates that approximately five million English language learners are enrolled in public schools across the country—roughly 10 percent of all students enrolled in K-12 schools in the United States.⁵

While English learners in this country come from over 400 different language backgrounds, the majority (around 75 percent) of English Language Learners are Spanish speakers.⁶ Arabic and Chinese are the second most common home languages spoken among ELLs (accounting for 2.7 percent and 2 percent, respectively, of the ELL population).⁷ English is the fourth most common home language (spoken by about 2 percent of ELLs) and may reflect students raised in multilingual households as well as students adopted from other countries who were raised speaking a different language but who now live in an English-speaking household.⁸

US school districts in more urban areas have higher percentages of ELL students. ELLs make up 14 percent of students in city school districts, compared with just 4 percent in rural districts. Suburban districts and towns fall in the middle with ELLs making up 9 percent and 6 percent of total public school enrollees.⁹

In general, most ELLs are in the elementary school grades. In 2018, 15.1 percent of kindergarteners were ELL students, 8.9 percent of 6th-graders and 7.4 percent of 8th-graders were ELLs. Only 5.1 percent of 12th graders were ELL students. It is believed this pattern reflects, in part, students who were identified as ELLs when they entered elementary school but gained enough English Language Proficiency by the upper grades to be reclassified as proficient.¹⁰ However, the majority of public school districts in the United States do have English Language Learners in their high schools. In fact, 62 percent of public high schools have at least some number of ELLs enrolled with around 800,000 high school ELL students nationwide.¹¹

How Are English Language Learners Described?

ELLs are a diverse, dynamic group, which is evident in the variety of terms used to describe them. Here are several of the most common:

ELL, or English Language Learner. *ELL (or EL)* is the most common term currently used in the United States to describe students who are in various stages of acquiring English and who require different levels of language support and development in order to become fully proficient in English.

Emergent Bilingual. The term emergent bilingual, coined and popularized by Dr. Ofelia García, focuses on “an asset-based view of the capabilities of emergent bilingual students, who are simultaneously acquiring a new set of linguistic capabilities in school and building on the valuable knowledge of their first language.”¹²

EMLL, or Emergent Multilingual Learner. *EMLL, or Multilingual Learner (MLL)*, further expands the term *emergent bilingual* to highlight students as speakers of multiple languages with many linguistic resources upon which they can build.¹³

DLL, or Dual language learner. A DLL is a child between the ages of zero and eight and who is in the process of learning English in addition to their home language(s) or who is learning two or more languages at the same time. DLLs may or may not be considered English language learners by their schools, depending on their performance on English language proficiency assessments.¹⁴

LEP, or limited English proficiency. *LEP* was used for many years by the US Department of Education for ELLs who had not yet demonstrated proficiency in English, according to state standards and assessments. When referring to students, the term LEP has been replaced by the term English Learner (EL) or ELL. However, when referring to parents of ELLs, the Department of Education still refers to them as LEP (Limited English Proficient) parents.¹⁵

ESL, or English as a Second Language. The term *ESL* was formerly used as a designation for ELL students, but is more commonly used as a general term for a program of instruction (e.g., the study of English in an English-speaking country) or a field of study.¹⁶ ESL is sometimes still used at the postsecondary level to refer to multilingual students.

ELD, or English language development. *ELD* is often used to describe instruction and programs for ELL students that focus on specifically developing English language proficiency in the domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking. ELD differs from *Sheltered Instruction* where instruction in a content area is being “adjusted” or scaffolded in order to help students learn content skills and knowledge while also supporting the learning of English. To put it simply, ELD instruction is mainly focused on developing proficiency in English, while Sheltered Instruction focuses on academic success in the content areas.¹⁷

TESOL, or Teaching English to speakers of other languages. *TESOL* is widely used to describe both TESL (teaching English as a Second Language) and TEFL (teaching English as a foreign language). In general, TESL tends to emphasize the needs of English language learners living in English-speaking countries who will need to use English in their daily lives, while TEFL involves teaching English as a foreign language in countries where English is not widely used.¹⁸

Many educators and researchers, including the authors of this book, prefer the term *ELL* because it emphasizes that students are active *learners* of English, as opposed to being limited or deficient in some way.

Adolescent English Language Learners