Journal of Effective Teaching in Higher Education

College Ready or Not? Engaging and Supporting English Language Learners in Higher Education

Katie D. Lewis, York College of Pennsylvania, klewis15@ycp.edu
Stephanie L. Brown, York College of Pennsylvania

Abstract. In recent years, there has been a greater emphasis on ensuring that high schools across the United States focus on college readiness standards and skills, with the goal that more students will persist and find greater success in college. Despite this focus, there are still significant gaps among the students who are deemed "ready" and are actually persisting and finding that success, specifically for English language learners (ELLs). In this article, we illustrate the landscape of ELLs enrolled in institutions of higher education. We then explore how ELL students are classified and how these different profiles intersect with the limited range and types of English as a Second Language (ESL) support available at the institutional level. Finally, we contribute to the very limited practical knowledge base on ELLs in the college setting, with a summary of promising best practices for college faculty across disciplines to consider in their instruction.

Keywords: English language learners, higher education, college readiness, instructional strategies

Recently, the United States experienced a decline in their role as a global leader in college completion rates. One of the factors contributing to the lower completion rates is the increased need for remedial coursework (Scott-Clayton et al., 2014). The U.S. Department of Education (n.d.) reports that "about a third of American students require remedial education when they enter college" (para. 3). Recognizing the need for reform in college preparedness, federal funding was allocated through the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), which provides federal funding to PreK-12 schools for educational reform to directly address college readiness through the following measures: (1) sets high standards for aligning with the state's higher education institutions (IHE) entrance requirements; (2) develops accountability measures and standards for college and career readiness; (3) provides federal funding to support student preparedness and supports transition from high school to IHE; (4) calls for a development of a partnership between PreK-12 and IHE (Malin et al., 2017; Minnich et al., 2016). States like California are among few in the nation that have a college readiness framework in place and have instituted other policy initiatives to provide more opportunities to ELLs (e.g., the Multilingual Education Act of 2016; the EL Roadmap).

Despite this focus, significant gaps exist among the students who are persisting and finding success, particularly for the racially/ethnically and linguistically diverse students who are historically underrepresented in higher education (Kanno & Cromley, 2012; Kanno & Kangas, 2014; Martin et al., 2017). Conley (2012) summarizes college readiness as, "A student who is ready for college and career can qualify for and succeed in entry-level, credit-bearing college courses leading to

DOI: https://doi.org/10.36021/jethe.v4i1.136

a baccalaureate or certificate, or career pathway-oriented training programs, without the need for remedial or developmental coursework" (p. 1). College readiness focuses on four distinct areas: cognitive strategies, content knowledge, self-management skills, and knowledge about postsecondary education (Conley, 2012). Higher education expects first-year students to be able to think critically, investigate, evaluate, and problem solve in various contexts. Along with the cognitive strategies, first-year students are expected to have a strong level of foundational content knowledge. Understanding key concepts and systems of structure within a content area is essential to the development of deeper understanding. The third key area of college readiness focuses on self-management skills; while these skills develop during college, first-year students are given greater responsibility for managing all aspects of their academic and social life. Finally, college readiness means that students understand how postsecondary education functions from the financial aid, the application process, required admissions exams, as well learning about the culture of higher education opposed to high school. While some conceptual research exists (see Perez & Morrison, 2016), few studies have focused on the college planning process for English language learners, let alone their advancement process once they do make their way onto this path (Kanno & Cromley, 2015).

College readiness is an admirable goal of secondary education, yet it is not a perfect system. Professors, instructors, lecturers, and adjuncts often still encounter underprepared college students who struggle within all four of the college readiness areas. The National Center for Education Statistics reports that 67.7% of the degree-granting postsecondary institutions offer remedial services to first-year students (2018–19). Those college students who struggle the most are often those who face the greatest challenges due to cultural, linguistic, or economic (CLED) diversity. The varied educational experiences and linguistic and cultural backgrounds of ELLs enrolled in universities and colleges make it challenging to find one uniform solution.

In this article, researchers explored the current literature related to the following questions:

1. Who are the ELLs in higher education?
2. What support systems are available to ELLs in higher education?
3. What are best practices for instruction for working with ELLs in higher education?

Theoretical Framework

The following theories guided the authors' approach to understanding the role of ELLs in IHE and practical applications for increasing the effectiveness of instruction for ELLs across the disciplines.

Bourdieu's Theory of Cultural Capital

Of the three forms of cultural capital Bourdieu (1986) proposes (institutionalized,

embodied, objectified), the institutionalized form is relevant to this review because of the way higher education can position an ELL for upward mobility. The cultural capital they gain from a college degree can be a game changer for ELLs. First, however, they have to acquire knowledge of the "rules of the game," which is often up to PreK-12 school personnel, such as guidance counselors and teachers, or in IHE, the professors and advisors. This leads to the second relevant form of embodied cultural capital: linguistic capital, which, for ELLs, is an often volatile currency yet vital for educational attainment.

Actor-Network Theory

There is an added level of complexity that emerges at the institutional level for ELLs; a barrier that comes as a result of persistent power dynamics that are deeply embedded in the fabric of education in America. To account for this, actor-network theory (ANT) provides a framework that captures these "non-human" elements and linkages that often reify the challenges ELLs face when it comes to access to, let alone participation and persistence in, higher education (Fenwick & Edwards, 2010; Latour, 2007). ANT provides a lens to understand the interplay between human and non-human (environmental) networks that can either interfere with or support their goals for higher education.

Zone of Proximal Development

Social constructivist, Lev Vygotsky (1978) developed the concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). ZPD is the area where student learning occurs best with scaffolded support from the teacher. Limited academic growth occurs outside of this zone, where the student experiences boredom and limited academic growth due to unchallenging work or learning does not occur due to high levels of frustration because the work is too difficult. Scaffolding is a support system that is removed over time as the student becomes more independent. Scaffolding instructional practices are essential to engaging ELL students. Gibbons (2009) conceptualized intellectual challenging instruction with appropriate scaffolding for ELLs. ELLs who experience high levels of challenge and scaffolding from the teacher experience the greatest academic growth.

It is within this theoretical viewpoint that authors explored practical applications for the college professor. Understanding the access barriers ELLs must overcome to persist in higher education as well as the means through which learners construct new understanding is imperative to providing meaningful instruction across disciplines.

Methods

This review of the literature included peer-reviewed journal articles and grey literature (e.g., technical reports, government documents) from the past ten years, with a specific focus on the academic discipline of education. Book reviews, dissertations, and editorials were excluded. Table 2 illustrates the search strategies and search terms/keywords that were used in the review, all conducted through the

online database OneSearch, through the authors' institutional library. We focused on the academic disciplines of education, social sciences, and sociology.

Table 2

Search strategies and key terms

Search strategy	Examples of search terms/keywords
Terminology variations	English language learners (ELLs); English learners (ELs); English as a Second Language (ESL); Long-Term English Language Learners (LTELLS); Limited English Proficiency (LEP);
Synonyms for "instructional strategies"	instructional practices; best practices; pedagogy; curriculum
Associated terms paired with key terminology	college readiness; career readiness; college access, higher education; instructional strategies; developmental education; community colleges; Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

Characteristics of ELLs in Higher Education

The learner profile of ELLs in higher education varies greatly from the academic to CLED background of English language learners. It is paramount that professors recognize these differences to provide appropriate support in the classroom.

International Students

In 2019, 1,095,299 (5.5%) of the total United States student body in higher education were international students (Bustamante, 2020). Of these international students, 431,930 were undergraduate students. About 70% of the international students enroll in 200 different institutions across California, New York, and Texas. The most common countries of origin are Canada, China, India, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea (Moody, 2019). The top fields of study for these students include business management, engineering, math/computer science, and social, physical, and life sciences. As part of the admissions process, international students complete a standardized English Language Proficiency exam. Their scores guide the institution in admission decision-making. Many institutions have a cut off score and/or offer an ESL program for students who are below the cut off score (Kice, 2014).

Immigrant Students

The United States has a long history of being a nation of immigrants. First generation immigrants are those who were born outside of the United States and later moved to the United States. In 2016, 14% of the US population were immigrants, a percentage that is steadily rising. First generation immigrants and their children made up about 20% of all students enrolled in college in the United States in 2015 (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2019). Second generation students are those students who were born in the United States, but whose parents were born in another country. It is important to note that while first generation immigrants are readily enrolling in higher education, there has also been an increase in the second-generation students enrolling (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2019). Age upon arrival to the United States plays a major role in an immigrant's success in higher education, "47% of all full-time undergraduate students who immigrated to the U.S. prior to age 12 went on to earn a degree" (Postsecondary National Policy Institute, 2019). Undocumented immigrants may face financial hardships, as they are not eligible for federal student aid. Language may also be a barrier for an immigrant student in higher education. The US Census Bureau reports that approximately 47% immigrants identified as Limited English Proficient (Batalova et al., 2020). Limited English proficiency (LEP) refers to a person whose first language is not English and has a limited ability to speak, read, or write in English.

Migrant Students

Little data is collected on the number of migrant students who attend institutions of higher education. Migrant students are "children and youth ages 0-21 whose families work in the agricultural and/or fisheries industries and who will often move across districts and state lines several times within a 12-36 month period of time" (Lundy-Ponce, 2010). Migrant children often experience gaps in their K-12 education as a result of frequent moves. The Migrant Student Leadership Institute (MSLI) at the University of California, Los Angeles, is one of the few programs that specifically address the college readiness of migrant students (Nuñez, 2009). This program focuses on providing college readiness preparation as well as social and cultural support for migrant students seeking a four-year degree. Migrant students who completed the MSLI program were more likely to attend an institution of higher learning as well as more likely to be successful in higher education (Nuñez, 2009). College Assistance Migrant Program (C.A.M.P.) is federal funding that is available to assist migrant students during their first year of college. The C.A.M.P. program serves 2,000 participants annually (Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2020).

Generation 1.5 Students

Generation 1.5 students are students who straddle first generation and second-generation worlds but belong to neither one. Sharing characteristics of both generations and cultural groups makes it difficult for the student to identify with

one culture. Generation 1.5 students may have been born in the United States but grew up speaking a language other than English at home. Some may have been born in another country but came to the United States for education or moved during their high school years (DeAnza College, n.d.). Generation 1.5 students have learned English for the most part by listening and speaking, rather than reading and writing. They may sound like a native English speaker yet have weaker academic literacy skills. These disparities in their language abilities and inconsistent attendance often results in misplacement in K-12 schools into ESL or low ability classrooms where they struggle to master academic subject areas. Generation 1.5 students struggle in higher education; even though they have graduated from US high schools, they often are lacking the strong foundational knowledge and skills needed to be successful (DeAnza College, n.d.).

Just as understanding the diversity of the ELL students in the classroom, it is equally important to understand the terminology used to label ELL students. The term ELL "refers to students who are not currently proficient as English speakers and are in the process of developing their English language skills" (ESLteacherEDU.org, 2020). ESL is the term used to identify either teachers of or programs for ELL students. ESL programs work with ELL students to develop fluency in academic and social language as well as serving as cultural bridge (ESLteacherEDU.org, 2020).

Supports for ELLs in Higher Education

IHE vary greatly in their levels of support for students who are ELLs. Most institutions require an English Language Proficiency exam prior to admission (Bergey et al., 2018). Those students who score below the cut off score may be offered conditional admission requiring enrollment in an ESL program run either through the university or private sector. Beyond this initial ESL program, few supports are consistently found in higher education settings. Even in the research, the majority of the focus is on effective instructional practices and pedagogies for ELLs in the K-12 setting (Gallagher & Haan, 2018). Additionally, there is even more of a dearth of research when it comes to the types of support, if any, for faculty responsible for helping ESL students find success in their college coursework.

Considerations for Instructional Practices

ELLs are successful in higher education when fostered in a rich learning environment that recognizes and supports their unique academic backgrounds. Ideally, these students are entering the university setting with the college readiness and skills to be successful, yet this is often not the reality. Course professors can help ensure the ELL student is successful by considering the instructional practices and characteristics of ELL students discussed below.

Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Culturally relevant pedagogy (CRP) was first developed by Gloria Ladson-Billings to understand the African American student population and has evolved to include

additional socially constructed "cultures," such as ELLs (Gay, 2010). Ladson-Billings (1995) views CRP as something "that empowers students to maintain cultural integrity, while succeeding academically." She popularized the teaching approach in the early 1990's with her work with teachers of African American students. In her discussion about ELLs, Stacey Lee (2012) builds on Ladson-Billings' work, calling this culturally "responsive" pedagogy a more action-oriented approach. One of the culturally responsive strategies professors can employ is perspective taking, a way to operationalize what it means to "show empathy" (Warren, 2018). In his seminal study, Ezra Stotland (1969) found two dimensions to perspective taking—"imagine self" (imagining how you would feel in the other person's situation) and "imagine other" (imagining how the other person feels in their situation). Surprisingly, few researchers have endeavored to build on this often ignored framing of empathy. Batson et al. (1997) note that the "imagine self" approach to perspective taking is less congruent with CRP principles, in that it tends to promote a more egocentric response often laden with implicit bias and privilege. On the other hand, with an "imagine other" approach to perspective taking, a person, in this case a course professor, "acknowledges the range of external social and cultural variables that may be determining the student's academic performance" (Batson et al., 1997, p. 174). Professors can begin by learning to pronounce their students' names correctly and take the time to briefly check in with them before or after class or during office hours. Building these respectful and empathic relationships can make a significant difference in the college experiences of ELL students.

Professors across disciplines can be culturally responsive in their teaching by providing explicit opportunities for students to integrate their cultural backgrounds and lived experiences into coursework. For example, teacher educators can provide opportunities for their preservice teachers to reflect on their own lived experiences with schooling and encourage them to use these reflections to scaffold their thinking about their own cultural identities. In turn, learning opportunities like this can also help them understand how their cultural identity intersects with their identity as a future educator. For ELL students in particular, this type of activity could surface important connections between their personal and professional experiences that could propel them into the teaching profession with a new sense of purpose. Lastly, it is important for professors to still maintain and explicitly communicate high (not hurried) expectations of ELL students. This may include maintaining eye contact during interactions, providing meaningful and in-depth feedback on assignments, and calling on ELL students to answer questions in class (Echevarria, 2018).

Academic Background Considerations

Understanding and recognizing that ELL students come from a variety of cultural and educational backgrounds with different lived experiences is paramount to facilitating their success. International students may lack cultural knowledge of U.S. specific events as the focus in history was on their own country's history. It is beneficial for these students to provide supplemental resources with additional content background knowledge. Immigrants and Generation 1.5 students may be proficient in oral English speaking and listening skills but lacking formal academic

English knowledge and skills. Providing these students with the information for on campus writing and tutoring centers is essential in helping them improve their academic language. These few examples highlight the complexity of teaching ELL students.

Kaur and Singh (2019) identified several challenges in academic writing practices for ESL learners. The first barrier recognizes that a lack in English language proficiency overridingly affects the students' ability to succeed in higher education. ESL students who come from weaker academic backgrounds struggle with the rigorous expectations of higher education. A second barrier is intentional plagiarism; those ESL students who were weaker in their English language proficiency were more likely to cut and paste text together to create an assignment. Additionally, some ESL students were unaware of plagiarism and the problems that it presents. For instance, Merkel (2020) describes the variation that exists between L1 (first language) writing practices in students' home cultures compared to the U.S. Plagiarism in relation to ELLs remains a complex and multilayered issue across the literature. The third barrier relates to difficulties in expressing ideas. ESL students struggled to elaborate and explain in detail their thoughts in written assignments (Kaur & Singh, 2019). A significant barrier for learning is the integrated learning of content and English language. Often in higher education, ELL students are struggling to learn new subject matter content and, at the same time, they are still mastering the English language. In essence, this duality of learning complex academic content and the English language concurrently is the crux of the problem for course instructors.

Second Language Acquisition

The process through which one acquires a second language is often under much scholarly debate. Originally, it was believed that second languages were best learned through a repetitious process focused on grammar and mechanics (Diaz-Rico, 2018). More recently, second language acquisition theories recognize the importance of ownership over one's learning and the intersectionality of academic and social learning. Rather than drill and kill, second languages are learned more effectively through an interactive process of learning. Cognitive psychology offers several theories (Baker, 2001; Cohen, 1996; Cummins, 1980) to language learning from which one may derive key understandings of ELLs in higher education.

First, the level of anxiety of the learner directly impacts their learning. If students have high anxiety related to language learning, then they will learn the language a slower rate (Diaz-Rico, 2018). Anxiety levels may increase as individuals reach adulthood due to a variety of factors including lower levels of self-efficacy or a fear of failure. Adults are more aware of their errors and take fewer risks in front of peers when learning a second language. College professors can reduce student anxiety by providing a safe learning environment. Second, students who are fluent in their L1 are more likely to grasp a second language (L2) quicker because they are able to transfer foundational language understandings (Cummins, 1980; Diaz-Rico, 2018). One such concept might be the idea that letters correlate to spoken or unspoken sounds that combine create words that are then organized into sentences

to create meaning. Students who have a weak L1 foundation tend to struggle more with academic literacy in L2. This is especially something to consider among Generation 1.5 students who may have graduated high school without L2 proficiency. Third, language strategies, both direct and indirect, are essential to ensuring the development of academic language. Indirect language strategies effective for developing L2 are acquired naturally in the learning process (Cohen, 1996). Direct language strategies may be taught and focus on the higher levels of learning. Fourth, intentional applications of instructional strategies are essential to ensuring the development of academic language. In the following section, the authors will explore selected strategies, which are beneficial across disciplines in higher education.

Opportunities for Critical Thinking and Academic Literacy

Second language acquisition often begins informally through the acquisition of social language. Individuals learn to navigate social situations through listening and conversing with peers. Formal academic language acquisition occurs in the classroom setting and may develop slower than social language. Academic literacy encompasses critical thinking, reading, writing, and speaking skills as well as students' disposition for advanced academic work (Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002). Entering first-year students should have a "fundamental understanding of audience, tone, language usage, and rhetorical strategies to navigate appropriately in various disciplines" (Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002, p. 13). Academic literacy is complex and filled with nuances, which are often discipline specific (Fenton-O'Creevy & van Mourik, 2016). Growth of academic literacy skills requires development of critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills encompass the ability to synthesize and analyze a text, engage in discourse, and question the text as well one's own claims (Intersegmental Committee of Academic Senates, 2002). Academic disciplines, similar to genres, vary in tacit rules and practices (Fenton-O'Creevy & van Mourik, 2016), which may create challenges for the English language learner. Therefore, it is necessary to foster opportunities for engaging in academic literacy and critical thinking in the classroom setting. Table 3 provides selected instructional strategies with an explanation along with an alignment to research.

Table 3

Selected Instructional Strategies for Fostering Critical Thinking and Academic Literacy

Strategy	Description	Selected Examples	Research Alignment
Structured Assignments	Assignments where the format remains the same but the prompt or topic changes	Chapter summaries, lab reports, mathematical proofs	Helmy, 2016
Revise and Resubmit	Allows students to produce drafts at various points in time	Research paper draft process	Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Kaur & Singh, 2019
Modeling	Provides examples of what is expected of students	Demonstration of a task or thought process, completion of the first problem in a set, show of previous work of students	Kim & Bowles, 2019; Witt & Soet, 2020
Collaborative Structures	In class or out of class activities where students are required to work together to accomplish the task	Think-Pair-Share activities; group work with team roles; discussion board contribution	Nokes-Malach et al., 2015; Scager, et al., 2016; Watanabe & Swain, 2007
Visual Representati on of Content	Graphic displays of content	Timelines, graphs, concept maps	Baxendell, 2003; Halwani, 2017; Petrie, 2003; Uba et al., 2017

Structured Assignments

Structured assignments are assignments where the format remains the same but the prompt or topic changes. The benefits of these assignments allow the students to focus on their reading and writing skills rather than worrying about the format of the assignment. Familiarity with the format enables the students to apply the previous assignments' feedback in an authentic manner. One of the greatest

downfalls of instructor feedback on student work is that the assignment is completed. Therefore, the student may read the comments but never have the opportunity to apply their new understanding. In economics, the structured assignment may involve reviewing current events and synthesizing and analyzing the economic impact on the local economy. This recurring assignment provides opportunities for the student to internalize and implement the instructor's recommendations from the previous assignment. Additional benefits are the use of familiar vocabulary and terms for ELL students. Applying the same processes and vocabulary used during lecture to a structured assignment provides a knowledge base from which the ELL student can springboard from (Helmy, 2016). In an economics class, reviewing terminology and examples of the poverty gap index related to regions prior to assigning a similar assignment focused on individual countries is another example of a structure assignment. A key to successful structured assignments is the repetition, which provides an opportunity for developing critical thinking skills based on instructor feedback as well as developing academic literacy skills within the discipline.

Embedded within structured assignments are scaffolded assignments, which benefit all undergraduate students, but the benefits for ELL students are exponential. Instead of assigning a term paper with one due date, scaffolded assignments break down the major assignment into smaller more manageable segments. Scaffolded assignments are essential in developing academic literacy within disciplines. For example, in a writing-intensive education course, undergraduate students are required to complete an action research project focused on a current educational issue. In this introductory course, the assignment is divided into twelve smaller assignments, each of which build on the previous one. The benefits for ELL students are opportunities for feedback, clarification of directions throughout the assignment process, and demonstrating growth throughout the semester.

Revise and Resubmit

English language learners struggle in academic writing more so than other subjects because of the cultural differences in rhetorical styles. These differences in rhetorical styles prove difficult because the ELL students struggle with phrasing even when their grammar and vocabulary may be correct (Grabe & Kaplan, 2014; Kaur & Singh, 2019). English language learners benefit from multiple opportunities to revise and resubmit written assignments. The revision process enables the students to correct grammatical errors as well as to elaborate on ideas based on the professor's feedback. It is through the revision process where writers become aware of mechanical and stylistic errors. Not only should the revision process be allowed, but it should also be a requirement for English language learners.

Model in Class

While all students can reap the benefits of effective modeling in class, it is especially important for ELL students and one of the most flexible strategies professors across disciplines can implement. One way professors can do this is by providing a partial or complete demonstration of what is expected of students on a

particular task. This can be done by the professor or by other students in the class if they have already shown mastery of the task or skill. For example, in a philosophy class, where the content and vocabulary can be very abstract, the professor could share an example of a Gettier case then ask students to devise their own according to the same basic structure. Relatedly, a professor can model not only a task but also a thought process. This may be especially useful in math courses, where the process of getting to the solution is just as important as the solution itself. A professor can "think out loud" with the students in a collaborative fashion and invite them to follow the steps needed to arrive at a solution (Kim & Bowles, 2019). Finally, providing students with visual examples of high quality student work completed in previous semesters can serve as another form of modeling that can greatly benefit ELL students. Some may argue that modeling is a disservice to students and could stifle original thinking. However, ELLs may have had significantly less exposure to the types of independent tasks expected of them in higher education. They also may have had many more scaffolds from an ESL teacher to support task completion. Modeling can be a starting point from which students can build.

Collaborative Structures

Collaborative structures are beneficial to ELLs for many reasons. First, the nature of collaborative structures means that the student will have opportunities to listen and participate in academic conversations with a peer. These structured opportunities for discourse are important in the learning process. They provide a setting for the ELL student to gain cultural understandings that are often taken for granted during a lecture setting. Second, understanding of content knowledge and skills may increase when the ELL student collaborates with a high performing peer (Watanabe & Swain, 2007). Collaborative learning promotes critical thinking as students engage in conversations about the topic while interacting, questioning, and explaining their ideas to each other (Scager et al., 2016). Finally, collaborative learning helps students to develop social skills necessary for success in the workplace. Without social interactions, collaboration falls short as it is through the discussion of ideas, crafting of rebuttals, and combining of perspectives/ideas that one develops critical thinking and academic literacy skills (Scager et al., 2016).

In higher education, collaborative structures are most frequently implemented as group projects to be completed outside of the class meeting time (Scager et al., 2016). To ensure successful collaboration, it is important that the instructor create an assignment that fosters interdependence and autonomy. Interdependence links all members of the group together by requiring equal amounts of participation as well as the ultimate success of the group hinging on each person completing a task (Scager et al., 2016). Autonomy to make decisions as a group is equally important for successful group work in higher education. Learners crave the independence to make choices on their own; however, a balance must be struck because too vague of an assignment may result in failed outcomes. In science laboratories, there are many benefits of collaborative structures stemming from conversations during the lab where knowledge is pooled together, peers correct students' errors, and students engage in observational learning. Nokes-Malach et al. (2015) found that

individuals achieved more when working in a collaborative structure when multiple perspectives are engaged and the workload is shared.

An untapped instructional strategy in higher education is in-class collaborative structures. Think-pair-share is an example of a collaborative strategy that could be interwoven during a larger lecture class. This strategy begins by the instructor posing a question and each student thinking about the problem/question. Next, the students turn to their neighbor and pair up and share their thoughts or solutions. This provides an opportunity for the affirmation of ideas or a chance to revise proposed solutions. In the final step, the instructor selects students to share out to the larger group. Within smaller class sizes, jigsaw activities are an effective strategy for reading a text that is either lengthy or complex through a collaborative structure. The instructor assigns groups, and each group is responsible for one section of the text. Rather than having to read the entire text, individuals are only responsible for their group's section. This benefits ELLs who may struggle to read a complex or lengthy passage in a short amount of time. Each group reads and extracts key information from their section. Finally, all groups share out their findings and everyone is responsible for the information learned in the text.

Visual Representation of Content

A learner gathers information through linguistic and non-linguistic components. For the ELL learner, nonlinguistic components often clarify understanding and subsequently result in greater comprehension of the content (Halwani, 2017; Petrie, 2003). The use of color, images, and graphics enhances comprehension and provides memory hooks. Features such as images, tables, charts, and figures all enhance a nonfiction text, particularly college textbooks. The strategic use of these elements both outside of class as well as during the lecture is beneficial to the ELL's understanding of the material. For example, a history professor may share an image of "Washington Crossing the Delaware" and ask students to describe the people and action in the image and predict the implications of the event. Benefits for the ELL students include interacting within group conversations, engaging in critical thinking, and making connections between visual and verbal (Halwani, 2017).

Visual aids, such as graphic organizers, Venn diagrams, timelines, and concept maps are particularly beneficial to ELL students in higher education. These non-linguistic tools organize information, highlighting the essential concepts that provide clarification and make a visual-verbal connection (Halwani, 2017). The use of graphic organizers in higher education leads to higher engagement for ELLs as well as opens the door for their greater comprehension of course content (Baxendell, 2003; Uba et al., 2017).

Modifying instruction for ELLs may seem daunting at first; however, these scaffolded strategies provide the infrastructure to support learning at the highest levels. These strategies also provide appropriate scaffolding and rigor to ensure that ELLs are working in the ZPD (Gibbons, 2009). Modifying course assignments does not equate to lowering expectations or rigor, rather it includes the creation of

meaningful assignments after careful consideration of the student's learner profile, language proficiency, and appropriate levels of scaffolding. These instructional strategies may be adapted across all disciplines and executed in a variety of ways to develop critical thinking and academic literacy for ELLs.

Final Thoughts

As we consider what it means to be "college ready," it is important not to lose sight of the academic and social emotional needs of ELLs across all levels, P-16. This is especially paramount as we navigate two pandemics, both of which have only exacerbated the barriers for ELLs in terms of equity and access to educational opportunities. IHEs may see increased enrollments of ELLs if more financial resources are provided to PreK-12 settings for dedicated positions that can better serve the variety of needs of ELLs.

This also may mean reimagining the role of PreK-12 guidance counselors and ESL personnel when it comes to educating ELLs and their families about the college preparation and application process. This is particularly true of those in rural areas who are often ignored for bilingual education programs and key ESL personnel supports due to low enrollments (Coady, 2020). In turn, more research is needed to help IHEs understand what works for different types of ELLs in college settings and what role faculty have to play in supporting their persistence. This knowledge can then inform the development of the types of support faculty may need to help students find success in their courses. With community colleges serving as a common entry point for ELLs, future research could also continue exploring the unique policies, programs, and practices that may be happening in this space and could potentially be scaled up to larger universities as well (Bergey et al., 2018). The practices identified here are by no means meant to be exhaustive but provide a meaningful snapshot of strategies professors across different fields of study might consider implementing in their classes to help these "college ready" ELL students achieve the success their high school guidance counselor assured them they could find.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this article.

References

Baker, C. (2001). *Foundations of bilingual education and bilingualism* (3rd ed.). Multilingual Matters.

Bustamante, J. (2020, April 12). International student enrollment statistics. Educationdata.org. https://educationdata.org/international-student-enrollment-statistics/

Batalova, J., Blizzard, B., & Bolter, J. (2020, February 14). Frequently requested statistics on immigrants and immigration in the United States. *Migration Policy Institute.* https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/frequently-requested-statistics-immigrants-and-immigration-united-states#Demographic

Batson, C. D., Early, S., & Salvarani, G. (1997). Perspective taking: Imagining how another feels versus imagining how you would feel. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*(7), 751–758.

Baxendell, B. W. (2003). Consistent, coherent, creative: The 3 C's of graphic organizers. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *35*, 46–53. https://doi.org/10.1177/004005990303500307

Bergey, R., Movit, M., Baird, A. S., & Faria, A. M. (2018). Serving English language Learners in higher education: Unlocking the potential. *American Institutes for Research*.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood.

Coady, M. R. (2020). Rural English learner education: A review of research and call for a national agenda. *Educational Researcher*, *49*(7), 524–532.

Cohen, A. (1996). *Second language learning and use strategies: Clarifying issues. Working Paper Series #3*. University of Minnesota Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition.

Conley, D. T. (2012). *A complete definition of college and career readiness*. Educational Policy Improvement Center.

Cummins, J. (1980). The cross-lingual dimensions of language proficiency, linguistic interdependence: Implications for bilingual education and the optimal age issue. *TESOL Quarterly*, *14*(21), 175–187.

DeAnza College. (n.d.). *Who are generation 1.5 students?* http://deanza.edu/english/resources/generation.html

Diaz-Rico, L.T. (2018). *The crosscultural, language, and academic development handbook: A complete K-12 reference guide* (6th ed.). Pearson.

Echevarria, J. (2018, November 14). *What are your expectations for English learners?* https://www.janaechevarria.com/?p=1167

ESLteacherEDU.org. (2020). *What is an ESL teacher?* https://www.eslteacheredu.org/what-is-an-esl-teacher/#:~:text=Teachers%20of%20English%20to%20Speakers,to%20des

cribe%20educating%20English%20Learners.&text=ELL%20students%20are%20referred%20to,that%20they%20are%20integrated%20into

Fenton-O'Creevy, M., & van Mourik, C. (2016). 'I understood the words but I didn't know what they meant': Japanese online MBA students' experiences of British assessment practices. *Open Learning: The Journal of Open, Distance and e-Learning*, *31*(2), 130–140. https://doi.org/10.1080/02680513.2016.1177503

Fenwick, T., & R. Edwards. 2010. *Actor-network theory in education*. Routledge.

Flores, S. M. (2014). Does English language learner (ELL) identification predict college remediation designation?: A comparison by race and ethnicity, and ELL waiver status. *Review of Higher Education*, *38*(1), 1–36. https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2014.0041

Gallagher, C. E., & Haan, J.E. (2018). University faculty beliefs about emergent multilinguals and linguistically responsive instruction. *TESOL Quarterly*, *52*, 304–330. https://doi.org/10.1002/tesq.399

Gay, G. (2010). *Culturally responsive teaching* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Gibbons, P. (2009). *English learners, academic literacy, and thinking: Learning in the challenge zone*. Heinemann.

Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R. B. (2014). *Theory and practice of writing: An applied linguistics perspective.* Routledge.

Halwani, N. (2017). Visual aids and multimedia in second language acquisition. *English Language Teaching*, *10*(6), 53–59. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1143525.pdf

Helmy, H.E. (2016). A lottery on the first day of classes! An innovative structured steps assignment on a partially randomly selected topic. *International Review of Economics Education*, *21*, 41–47. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iree.2015.12.002

Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates. (2002). *Academic literacy: A statement of competencies expected of students entering California's public colleges and universities*. https://senate.universityofcalifornia.edu/_files/reports/acadlit.pdf

Kanno, Y., & Cromley, J. G. (2012). English language learners' access to and attainment in postsecondary education. *TESOL Quarterly*, *47*(1), 89–121.

Kanno, Y., & Cromley, J. (2015). English language learners' pathways to four-year colleges. *Teachers College Record*, *117*(12), 1–44.

Kanno, Y., & Kangas, S. E. (2014). "I'm not going to be, like, for the AP": English language learners' limited access to advanced college-preparatory courses in high school. *American Educational Research Journal*, *51*(5), 848–878. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214544716

Kaur, M., & Singh, M. (2019). Academic reading and writing challenges among international EFL Master's students in a Malaysian university: The voice of lecturers. *Journal of International Students*, *9*(4), 972–992. https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831214544716

Kice, A. R. (2014, September). *How U.S. colleges gauge international students' English skills. U.S. News & World Report.* https://www.usnews.com/education/blogs/international-student-counsel/2014/09/11/how-us-colleges-gauge-international-students-english-skills

Kim, H. R., & Bowles, M. (2019). How deeply do second language learners process written corrective feedback? Insights gained from Think-alouds. *TESOL Quarterly*, *53*(4), 913–938.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 465–491. https://doi.org/10.2307/1163320

Latour, B. 2007. *Reassembling the social: An introduction to actor-network-theory*. Oxford University Press.

Lee, S. J. (2012). New talk about ELL students. *Phi Delta Kappan*, *93*(8), 66–69.

Lundy-Ponce, G. (2010). Migrant students: What we need to know to help them succeed. Colorincolorado! https://www.colorincolorado.org/article/migrant-students-what-we-need-know-help-them-succeed

Malin, J. R., Bragg, D. D., & Hackmann, D. G. (2017). College and career readiness and the Every Student Succeeds Act. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *53*(5), 809–838. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X17714845

Martin, N. D., Spenner, K. I., & Mustillo, S. A. (2017). A test of leading explanations for the college racial-ethnic achievement gap: Evidence from longitudinal case study. *Research in Higher Education*, *58*(6), 617–645. doi:10.1007/s11162-016-9439-6

Merkel, W. (2020). A case study of undergraduate L2 writers' concerns with source-based writing and plagiarism. *TESOL Journal*, *11*(3), e00503.

Minnich, C., Martin, R., Pernsteiner, G., & Gandal, M. (2016). *Leveraging ESSA to increase college readiness and completion*. https://edstrategy.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/HEHS-Leveraging-ESSA-092816.pdf

Moody, J. (2019, November). Where, how international students are studying in the U.S. *U.S. News & World Report.* https://www.usnews.com/education/bestcolleges/articles/where-how-international-students-are-studying-in-the-us

National Center for Educational Statistics (2018–19). Percentage of degree-granting postsecondary institutions with first-year undergraduates offering remedial services, by control and level of institution: 1989–90 through 2018–19. https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/Search?query=remedial&query2=remedial&resultType=all&page=1&sortBy=relevance&overlayDigestTableId=202005

Nokes-Malach, T. J., Richey, J. E., & Gadgil, S. (2015). When is it better to learn together? Insights from research on collaborative learning. *Educational Psychology Review*, *27*, 645–656. doi:10.1007/s10648-015-9312-8

Nuñez, A. (2009). Migrant students' college access: Emerging evidence from the migrant student leadership institute. *Journal of Latinos and Education, 8*(3), 181–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/15348430902888781

Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. (2020). *College Assistance Migrant Program.* https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-migrant-education/college-assistance-migrant-program/

Perez, C. P., & Morrison, S. S. (2016). Understanding the challenges of English language learners and increasing college-going culture: Suggestions for school counselors. *Ideas and Research You Can Use: VISTAS*, *18*, 1–12.

Petrie, G.M. (2003). ESL teachers' views on visual language: a grounded theory. *The Reading Matrix*, *3*(3), 137–168. https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/0800/0b72c5acaad03c3c8cb383bf287259cbd035.pdf

Postsecondary National Policy Institute. (2019, December 11). Immigrant students in higher education. https://pnpi.org/immigrant-students-in-higher education/

Scager, K., Boonstra, J., Peeters, T., Vulpershorst, J., & Wiegant, F. (2016). Collaborative learning in higher education: Evoking positive interdependence. *CBE Life Sciences Education*, *15*(4), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.16-07-0219

Scott-Clayton, J., Crosta, P.M., & Belfield, C.R. (2014). Improving the targeting of treatment: Evidence from college remediation. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 36(3), 371–393. https://www.jstor.org/stable/43773472

Stotland, E. (1969). Exploratory investigations of empathy. In Berkowitz, L. (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (vol. 4). Academic Press.

Uba, E., Oteikwu, E.A., Onwuka, E., & Abiodun-Eniayeken. (2017). A research-based evidence of the effect of graphic organizers on the understanding of prose fiction in ESL classroom. *Sage Open, 7*(2), 1–9. https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244017709506

U.S. Department of Education. *College- and career-ready standard*s. https://www.ed.gov/k-12reforms/standards

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.

Warren, C. A. (2018). Empathy, teacher dispositions, and preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy. *Journal of Teacher Education*, *69*(2), 169 –183.

Watanabe, Y., & Swain, M. (2007). Effects of proficiency differences and patterns of pair interaction on second language learning: Collaborative dialogue between adult ESL learners. *Language Teaching Research*, *11*(2), 121–142. https://doi.org/10.1177/136216880607074599

Witt, D., & Soet, M. (2020, July 13). 5 effective modeling strategies for English learners. https://www.edutopia.org/article/5-effective-modeling-strategies-english-learners