

# Introduction

It is now very likely that regular classroom teachers will work with language-different children. According to the latest census figures more than eight million school-aged children live in homes in which languages other than English are spoken. The continuing arrival of large groups of refugees makes it more and more probable that the classroom teacher will be asked to teach children who do not yet speak English (Allen 1986).

The international organization of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) estimates that every classroom teacher at some time during his or her career will have at least one student who speaks English as another language. This book is written for these teachers. Almost none of these teachers have received any formal training in teaching English as another language, and almost all must rely on their own good sense, their sensitivity to their students—whatever languages they speak—and their ability as professionals to alter the curriculum to suit their students, selecting the materials and techniques which best fit. Sometimes there are workshops that address some of the problems these teachers face, either in their district or at conventions, but for the most part they go it alone. They do their best, but they do it without adequate information from professional language teachers—especially information on how to integrate new speakers of English into their class. This book offers that information.

## **Principles That Make for Good Practice**

In this introduction we offer the principles that we feel are the most important for teachers to know about language learners and language learning, and we discuss in a general way the applications of those principles to classrooms, K-12. Following this is an overview of the volume, with brief summaries of the chapters. Finally, we offer a brief bibliography of suggestions for further reading.

*Principles*

1. People who are learning another language are, first of all, people.
2. Learning a language means learning to do the things you want to do with people who speak that language.
3. A person's second language, like the first, develops globally, not linearly.
4. Language develops best in a variety of rich contexts.
5. Literacy is part of language, so writing and reading develop alongside speaking and listening.

Let's look more deeply at each of these in turn.

*Principles into Practice*

*Principle 1.* It seems so obvious that people who are learning another language are, first of all, people, that one wonders why it needs to be said at all. We list this principle first because it is the most important and, although it is obvious, it seems frequently forgotten. We have seen many students placed two, three, or more years behind their age-mates because they do not speak English, as though speaking a language other than English were a terrible form of retardation that prevented the children from communicating with and playing with other children their own age. It is harder to be an eleven-year-old in a second grade class than to be an eleven-year-old in a fifth grade class, even if the second grade curriculum looks easier.

Children who are learning another language are, first of all, children. They have the same needs as other children their age. Like all children, they need to feel good about themselves and about their relationships to those around them. They need opportunities to be successful in school, and if their English is not proficient enough for them to be successful with academic assignments, the teacher can find nonacademic opportunities for success. They need plenty of opportunities, in class as well as outside it, to form friendships and to do things with their friends. Children's developmental stages are more important than levels of English proficiency. In addition, children's cognitive development proceeds similarly across cultures, so second-language children are ready to explore the same concepts that their age group is exploring.

The principle that people learning another language are, first, people, applies to older language learners as much as it does to children. It is just

as important, perhaps even more important, for teenagers to be with their own age group as it is for younger students.

Students learning English as another language already have command of a language and a culture that, usually, neither the teacher nor the other students have. They are not deficient or limited in any way; rather, they can be a rich source of information and assistance in teaching many things, from social studies to values clarification.

The clearest application of this first principle to school organization is this: second-language students need to be with first-language students. If they are isolated from native-English-speaking students, they cannot learn English from them, nor can they share any of the riches they have to offer. Classrooms should be organized so that small groups of first-language and second-language students work together on meaningful tasks.

In emphasizing the similarities among children, we don't want to overlook individual differences. Refugee children may have traumatic histories and thus require more emotional support than some other children. Many Southeast Asian children have watched friends and family members die horribly; their journey to North America has been an act of courage and endurance that few of us born here will ever be asked to match. Often they cannot talk about the horrors they have experienced, for psychological as well as for linguistic reasons. Many teachers, especially those in elementary schools, are sensitive to their students' moods; that sensitivity and delicacy are a teacher's greatest assets when working with students who have suffered traumas. Sensitive teachers recognize the individuality of each student; they don't lump all of their students together. That is important with students learning English, too: there are enormous differences in the backgrounds of a Hmong villager and a Vietnamese doctor, for example, and added to these differences are differences in life history, in present situation, and in individual temperament, talents, and interests. Urzua's "A Children's Story" (1986) discusses many factors in the school and home that can affect second-language learners.

*Principle 2.* Learning a language means learning to do the things you want to do with people who speak that language. It doesn't mean learning forms of language to use someday in some possible situation: it means using the language (however badly) today, now, to do things. We can contrast the typical dialogue given in a foreign language class with dialogue overheard on a playground.

Foreign Language Dialogue  
(translated)

A: Hello, Isabel. How are you?

Dialogue Overheard on a  
Playground

A: Want to play?

B: Fine, thanks. And you?

B: OK.

The foreign language dialogue practices forms for future use, for the day one will actually be able to greet someone; the overheard dialogue is what two children actually said, the forms they used in order to start playing together. The meaning of the invitation to play was clear from the context: one girl with a ball held it out to another, established eye contact, and raised her brows as she spoke. The other child did not need to say anything, certainly not "in complete sentences"; she needed only to return the eye contact, smile slightly, and walk forward to the ball with one hand out. She said, "OK," indicating that she had mastered one of America's great contributions to English. The formula OK can be used in a great variety of situations: with rising intonation it becomes a question, with emphatic intonation it becomes an expression of strong agreement and solidarity. Some visitors to the United States have suggested that it is possible to cross the country using only that phrase.

The child who said "OK" had a chance to hear authentic language in a context that, in a sense, taught the language appropriate to that context. It is not as appropriate for one child on a playground to say to another, "Hello, how are you?" as to say, "Wanna play?" Children on the playground teach the ESL child the language by playing. They develop their own ways of communicating, ways the teacher may not be aware of, but ways that are effective at making meaning together. ESL speakers need many, many chances to use the language in a wide variety of situations like the playground, where the emphasis is on using English to do what they want to do, not on producing correct forms of the language. Classrooms should be organized so that small groups of first-language and second-language students work together on meaningful tasks that nudge children to use language, so that the same sort of communication and teaching that happens on the playground can happen inside the classroom.

Language development means learning to use a language to socialize, to learn, to query, to make believe, and to wonder. All of that takes many years to learn, whether it is the first language or the second. Many teachers have students in their classes who have had two years of ESL training and who now are placed in all-English environments and expected to perform as well as their classmates. Some do, but the majority struggle. How many of us could carry a full academic load in a new country with only two years' training in that language? Second-language students need continuing but changing kinds of support as they develop English. That support should not be stopped after one, two, or three years, but

should be modified in ways to help the learner develop the kind of language needed for academic success. Some schools offer pull-out classes; for part of each day ESL students meet with a teacher of English as a second language. These classes permit students to receive the focused attention of an adult trained in second-language development; such classes can be invaluable sources of information for the regular classroom teacher, because the teacher of English as a second language, or TESL, is best qualified to determine the ESL student's progress in English and to make suggestions to the classroom teacher. While such classes provide invaluable assistance, they are not sufficient. The regular classroom teacher also needs to adjust the classroom so that the second-language student can proceed to learn both the language and the content subjects as fast as possible.

*Principle 3.* A person's second language, like the first, develops globally, not linearly. Language is not learned as a jigsaw of tiny bits of mastered skills, each fitting into a pattern, but rather as an entire picture that is at first blurred, only gradually coming into focus. Anyone who has watched a one-year-old child becoming a language user has seen this: the toddler's pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar are so inadequate that the baby's initial attempts at communication cannot be understood without a caregiver who, knowing the context, focuses on possible meanings, not on eliciting some adult standard of speech from the child. As the toddler's understanding of the world enlarges, so does the child's language: a three-year-old can talk about a number of things, but pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar, although noticeably better than two years earlier, still are far from an adult standard. (See Wells 1986, for a clear, research-based discussion of first-language development.) Second-language development is not identical to first-language development, but in this important respect it is: it develops globally, not piecemeal.

What does this mean to the classroom teacher? It means, first, that we should offer our second-language students a rich bath of language, not a string of language beads, one bead at a time. We should not waste the students' time with worksheets, word lists, or pronunciation drills; these are little pieces of a jigsaw that the student is expected to fit together without having seen the picture of the completed puzzle. Instead, we should make sure that our second-language students are constantly engaged in meaningful activities with their first-language classmates, activities in which the students talk with each other. Most of these activities concern academic tasks. (See Rigg and Enright's "Endnote" [1986] for an example of one teacher's classroom.) For example, if a first grade teacher is attempting to teach concepts

of measurement and distance, the children can use tape measures or lengths of string to measure how far each can hop, or how long a giant step is in the game "Mother, May I," and in small groups record their measurements, deciding which was the smallest and longest, and then the groups can share and compare with the entire class. A junior high teacher working with more sophisticated sorts of students and measurements can have small groups of two or three students design and fly paper airplanes. The students use measurements in the design and production of their airplanes and in determining flight distances. If they take an average of three flights, they also are using some numerical skills. They can make a class chart of time in flight and flight distance.

When the class is arranged so that the students work together to pose and to solve problems, students will talk with each other about the problem and solutions. That talk is the "warm bath of language" that we referred to earlier; the second-language learner hears and participates in conversation that is usually meaningful because the context makes the meaning clear. Of course, when students are working with concrete items that they can manipulate, it's much easier for the beginning ESL speaker to comprehend. If a group is solving the problem of what sort of plane flies farthest, it is easier for a second-language student to comprehend what's going on than if the group is discussing an issue of student government. For this reason, science and art curricula offer many opportunities for groups to work with concrete items and for the ESL student to learn more English by working with the group. These content areas are not the only ones that offer possibilities for group problem solving: the airplane contest fits into the math curriculum. In social studies, groups of students studying communities can make models of buildings, which offers opportunities to form, shape, build, and to talk about all of these. This all relates directly to the fourth principle.

*Principle 4.* Language develops best in a variety of rich contexts. Ideal situations are those in which the student understands what's happening and is also learning something new. Materials can be part of rich contexts: for example, children manipulating magnets and iron filings develop new concepts and the vocabulary to talk about those concepts. Whenever possible the class should leave the classroom, because the community outside offers so many potentially rich contexts for all of the students to learn from. A field trip does not necessarily need a school bus, parental permission slips, and sack lunches: a walk around the block just outside the school can offer innumerable opportunities for considering ques-

tions that fascinate students. For example, how much debris is there in this one-meter square? Is there more in that one than in another square meter? What, exactly, forms the debris? What does this suggest about the people who have passed by? These are the same questions an archaeologist asks; young students can ask the same, and can use the same basic archaeological techniques and logic to address these questions. Most schools have parking lots; a trip to the lot offers the same sorts of opportunities as a walk round the school. What sorts of cars are parked there, with specifics of brands, years, countries of origin? What are the physical characteristics of the cars and motorcycles, their composition, color, weight, etc.? Do the schools in the ESL students' countries also have parking lots? What similarities and differences are there in how people get to school? Students themselves can think of many more questions, questions that they themselves find interesting. These are just two suggestions for using the school grounds. Trips that go further afield are certainly recommended. It is important to note that it is not the location or materials that make the context: it is what the students do at the location or with the materials. If they are working together on a topic of mutual interest with plenty of opportunity for conversation, both first- and second-language students benefit. This applies to printed material just as it does to concrete items. A book that has clear illustrations of the text may be readable for a second-language student, if the student is working with a classmate, and the two have chances to discuss the book, comparing their impressions and reactions.

*Principle 5.* Literacy is part of language development. Writing, speaking, listening, and reading all nourish one another; we don't wait for mastery of one before encouraging development of the other three. This principle applied to classroom organization means that ESL speakers should be involved with literacy activities from the first. Second-language students should not be expected to keep up with a class reading group, but they should also not be refused the chance to read. They need not be fluent English speakers before they can write and read.

They need to hear literature read aloud by the teacher, because this is one of the easiest ways (and one of the most enjoyable for the entire class) for the second-language student to discover the sorts of English that we call "literary." This is how they learn the structure of narratives in English; it's how they learn "once upon a time," "happily ever after," and many other phrases. More, they learn the sorts of English that are found only in literature, and their reading, writing, and conversation are all enriched by this.

They need to have reading materials that are comprehensible. Often, it is quite difficult for a teacher to select such materials: materials mandated by the curriculum, such as basals, may be difficult for all the students to read, especially if the books are written to readability formulas rather than to high standards of children's literature. These are almost impossible to read for a student who is just beginning to know the second language. ESL students sometimes appear to understand skill exercises from reading workbooks and dutifully underline where they're told, but these exercises almost always fragment language, and therefore are not reading material, but just a meaningless ritual. For the student who is just beginning literacy in English, the language experience approach offers a technique for producing individual reading materials for the ESL students, because those materials reflect the students' ideas phrased in their ways. Picture books with strong illustrations and stories with predictable patterns and repetitive language can help children comprehend text. (See the individual chapters by Rigg and by Allen in this volume for more specific information on these techniques.)

Even students just beginning to learn English can write, as long as the writing is authentic; that is, it is the student's own composition for the student's own purposes, not a product for the teacher's evaluation. Even if a child can only make a couple of marks on a drawing to indicate ownership, that is authentic writing. Careful copying of a set of sentences from the board, however much it looks like English, is not authentic writing. Students with a little English proficiency can keep dialogue journals, which they can share with the teacher every other week or so; the teacher replies in the journal, commenting only on the content, never on the forms of language used. Other sorts of authentic writing that occur naturally in active classrooms include keeping records of the care given the class gerbil, fish, or other animals; keeping records of other classroom chores, a kind of "K.P." list; charting all sorts of information, from the number of blocks each student travels from home, to seconds of flight time with the paper airplanes; writing a script for a play, perhaps based on a story the teacher has read to the class; writing the rules for a game that one group makes for another; and more. Obviously, many of these can be best done in small groups. Every writing activity suggested here is closely integrated with conversation and with reading; those aspects of language both inform and are informed by the students' writing.

When all of the principles that we've listed are put into practice, a meaning-centered classroom emerges, one in which the curriculum is set more by the teacher than by some central committee that has never met these particular students. The

students work in small groups much of the time—second-language students integrated with first-language students—on projects that the students believe are relevant to them. A classroom that is meaning-centered doesn't waste time on meaningless pursuits, and the amount of time saved by omitting meaningless exercises is enormous. There is ample time for daily sustained silent reading, for daily journal writing, for teacher-read stories, and for whole-class sharing of individual and group project updates. This kind of classroom makes for the best language development for students using English as their native tongue and for students who are using English as another tongue. We like to call them **REAL** students: **R**eaders and **w**riters of **E**nglish as **A**nother **L**anguage.

### Overview of Chapters

Before we summarize the individual chapters, we want to indicate how each one relates to the whole. The first chapter, by Jean Handscombe, describes the variety of students in ESL programs and lists the characteristics of a quality program for them. Next, Carole Urzúa spells out what the classroom language arts teacher and the ESL teacher can learn from each other. The next four chapters focus on elementary students: Judith Wells Lindfors points out the characteristics of a quality elementary classroom; Virginia G. Allen describes the contributions that literature can make to REAL students; Pat Rigg tells why and how to use the language experience approach; and Elizabeth A. Franklin's careful, detailed study of one youngster's art and writing indicates how observation can inform teaching. Carole Edelsky speaks to upper elementary and secondary teachers as she explains how to use language variation in the school's surrounding community as a strength—a subject of study as well as a means of learning. The next two chapters focus on secondary students: Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley present their CALLA model, its theoretical foundation, and its in-school application; David Freeman and Yvonne S. Freeman report on a summer school program that may be a model for districts wishing to prevent dropouts and pushouts. In the final chapter, Sarah Hudelson indicates how teachers—whether elementary, middle, or secondary—can incorporate English into content areas, so that they teach the language at the same time that they are fulfilling curriculum objectives.

### *A Quality Program*

As a New Canadian, Jean Handscombe understands firsthand many of the issues facing immigrants to this continent. Her chapter addresses the questions: Who are these students? What sorts of support do they need? How can we best get that support to them? In answering these questions, she relies on the programs she has helped to develop in Ontario, programs that are international models. The Canadian government and the provincial governments within Canada have accepted the responsibility, financial as well as ethical, for integrating New Canadians. They recognize that allowing immigrants and refugees to enter their borders commits the governments to support the newcomers in their attempts to become full-fledged citizens, with all that that means in terms of learning English, gaining employment suitable to their education and experience, obtaining decent housing and health care, and so on. Both federal and state governments in the United States of America could improve their programs a great deal by emulating the Canadians.

Handscombe reminds us that there are widely varying groups of students for whom English is another language: immigrants, refugees, international students, and second-generation immigrants, not to mention those people whose language and cultures on this continent antedate any English speakers—native peoples and speakers of French and Spanish. Handscombe lists three factors to consider in placing and teaching these different students: their educational backgrounds, which can differ dramatically; the proficiency level of English that they require; and whether the school demonstrates that it values these students' home cultures. She then outlines the sorts of support these students need, describing five key components of a quality program: orientation, monitoring, parental involvement, language, and academic upgrading.

### *I Grow for a Living*

Carole Urzúa's chapter brings together applications of current and recent research in both first- and second-language development. She notes the knowledge gap between two groups—mainstream teachers, who know a lot about language arts, and ESL teachers, who know a lot about second-language development. Each group has remained relatively ignorant of what the other group knows. Urzúa seeks to bridge that gap. She summarizes insights from recent research in reading and composition—from such scholars as the Goodmans in reading, and Atwell, Calkins, and Graves in writing. Urzúa explains how those insights translate into classroom practice, especially when

the students are Readers and writers of English as Another Language. She also summarizes findings of recent research from such linguistic scholars as Krashen and indicates how those findings translate into practice in the regular classroom in which a few students are REAL.

### *The Classroom: A Good Environment for Language Learning*

Judith Wells Lindfors asks of any classroom material or activity, "Would this make sense outside the classroom?" and this touchstone is one which her graduate and undergraduate students quickly adopt, focusing their classes on meaning rather than on form.

In this chapter, Lindfors first notes how all children develop their first language with little observable effort, and she asserts that the two major factors responsible are (1) the environment, and (2) the ways a young language learner uses the environment. Then she applies her touchstone to a classroom in which authentic interaction can take place among the students, and she indicates how three rather standard language arts activities—show and tell, reading stories, and writing dialogue journals—help this interaction at the same time that they help the REAL students develop English.

### *Literature as a Support to Language Acquisition*

Virginia G. Allen's chapter asserts that children's literature offers a great deal to the REAL student (as well as to the native speaker of English). This is not literature rewritten to some "readability" formula that restricts vocabulary and syntax. As Rigg (1986) points out, such formulas are "a house of cards." In *Report Card on Basal Readers* (1988), K. Goodman and others show why reading materials that are rewritten to formulas are less readable than the originals. Allen here refers to such classics as *The Gingerbread Man*, *Three Little Pigs*, and *The Little Red Hen*, as well as to modern children's literature such as Hutchins's *Titch*, de Paolo's *Strega Nona*, and the Woods' *Napping House*. Observing and reporting on one REAL student as an example, Allen shows that even a student who doesn't speak in class can understand and enjoy a good story such as *The Gingerbread Man*. The student can talk about the story afterwards, because the language with which to discuss the story comes from the story itself. Allen says that in selecting works of literature, teachers need to look for predictability in plot line, in repetitious language, and in illustrations that help comprehension; they also need to choose books that can be incorporated into students' further learning

through writing and collaborative conversations. Hough, Nuss, and Enright (1986) agree, and suggest specific ways the teacher who is reading aloud can increase students' comprehension.

#### *Language Experience Approach: Reading Naturally*

Pat Rigg describes how the language experience approach (LEA) can be used to elicit reading material for the REAL student who is just becoming literate, regardless of the student's age. She explains why teachers need to accept, without correction, each student's contribution to the story, however ungrammatical. Rigg indicates how this approach moves from students dictating into students writing for themselves.

#### *Encouraging and Understanding Visual and Written Works*

Elizabeth A. Franklin's chapter builds on the Work of Patricia Carini, who has for years advocated learning from students. Franklin looks in great detail at the art and writing of one student, demonstrating with this one little girl how much observant teachers can learn about their students. Elementary teachers may want to copy Franklin's ideas, setting up conditions so that students will draw, paint, write, and dictate, and then studying these products to learn more about each student, adding observation notes of the contexts.

#### *Putting Language Variation to Work*

Carole Edelsky's chapter, like Sarah Hudelson's later in this volume, addresses the question of how to combine academic activities with language teaching so that the students gain in both areas. Edelsky suggests having the students act as budding linguists, studying the variation in language use in their own homes and their own communities, and she details just how this can be done.

#### *The Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach*

Anna Uhl Chamot and J. Michael O'Malley speak to the often-forgotten secondary school teacher who sees each student for less than an hour a day, but is expected to keep all students up with the assigned curriculum, even the ESL student who can't read the textbook, much less write answers to the questions following the chapters. Chamot and O'Malley have developed an approach to this problem, named CALLA, the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach, which offers guidelines for helping the ESL student ease into the mainstream. Beginning

with a brief outline of their theoretical foundation, Chamot and O'Malley present the principles of CALLA and then suggest how these principles might be applied to a lesson.

### *A Road to Success*

David Freeman and Yvonne S. Freeman report on a summer program with at-risk Hispanic and Yaqui secondary students. Using four principles of teaching and learning, the teachers worked with these students to help them succeed in two courses required for graduation—biology and United States history. The summer program was significant not only because the students developed academically, but also because they gained confidence in themselves and in their academic abilities.

### *"Teaching" English through Content-area Activities*

Sarah Hudelson points out that as students whose native language is not English enter our schools in ever increasing numbers, a major responsibility of the schools has become both to facilitate students' ability to use English to accomplish their own aims or purposes and to use English to achieve in school, to use English to learn school content (e.g., math, science, social studies, etc.). This chapter details one way in which elementary and secondary teachers may use content-area objectives and develop units of activities based on content and on current information available about second-language development. The chapter includes examples of content-area objectives and activities for a variety of age levels.

Pat Rigg and Virginia G. Allen

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