

# Differentiation for English Language Learners

## Unit 4 *Planting A Community*

**Purpose:** English language learners (ELL) have specific learning needs that require an understanding of language acquisition theories, language development stages, cultural differences and knowledge of specialized instructional methodology. The differentiation for ELL strategies and instructional recommendations provided in A4L units is reflective of second language theoretical principles, best practices and grounded in the Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) model. Careful attention has been given to providing teachers with relevant and sound instructional strategies that support ELL attainment of English language proficiency and literacy skills through meaningful activities and assignments.

**Language Acquisition Theories:** Language acquisition theories assert that children follow a natural progression of language development that is monitored for accuracy and requires comprehensible input that is processed through an affective filter. Understanding how language acquisition relates to ELL requires that *learning* and *acquisition* be viewed as two separate processes. For ELL *learning* is associated with a more formal type of language knowledge, while *acquisition* is the progression that takes place in learning the language when used authentically by ELL in formal and informal settings. Since the language use for academic instruction requires more cognitively demanding language skills, it is essential to make lessons understandable by differentiating and scaffolding instruction based on ELL’s stages of second language acquisition.

**Stages of Second Language Acquisition:** Language minority students advance through the same language acquisition stages. However, length of transition from one stage to another is influenced by several factors such as student’s age, native language proficiency and prior school experience.

<b>Stage I</b> <i>Pre-Production</i>	<b>Stage II</b> <i>Early Production Stage</i>	<b>Stage III</b> <i>Speech Emergence Stage</i>	<b>Stage IV</b> <i>Intermediate fluency</i>	<b>Stage V</b> <i>Advanced Fluency</i>
Minimal comprehension, no verbal production.	Limited Comprehension; One/two-word response	Increased comprehension; Simple sentences; Some errors in speech.	Very good comprehension; More complex sentences; Complex errors in speech	Near-native in their ability to perform in content area learning.

Since ELL tend to have an underdeveloped English vocabulary, the use of classroom strategies that provide active student engagement through social interactions and verbal scaffolding will facilitate an increase in the use of academic vocabulary and promote rapid movement in the language development stages. Most **Stage I** language minority students have approximately a 500 word English vocabulary, and they often remain silent during classroom instruction/activities. However, they can participate if provided with the appropriate structure and support. Also, students in **Stages II and III** benefit from peer mentoring and modeling.

**Cultural Differences:** Teaching and learning practices as well as societal norms vary across cultures. Therefore, when interacting with culturally and linguistically diverse students it is vital for teachers to gain an understanding of the cultural traditions of their students. While acquiring this type of cross-cultural competence requires time, the benefits are significant. By exploring ELL basic cultural differences and reflecting on their own ethnic and cultural backgrounds teachers can reduce misinterpretations of student behavior, increase positive communication with parents, avoid placing students outside their cultural comfort zone and provide instruction that is culturally relevant to ELL. When exploring the cultural background of ELL, teachers should consider the following guided reflective questions:

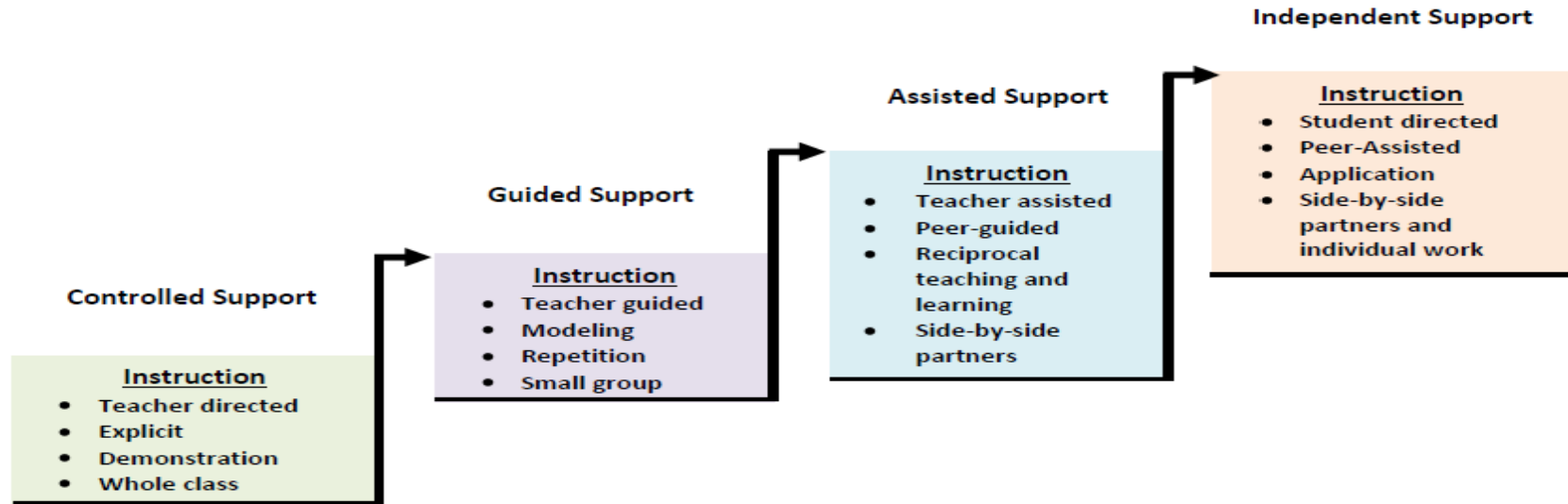
1. *How does my student's culture acquire knowledge?*
2. *How does my student's culture solve problems?*
3. *How does my student's culture communicate non-verbally?*
4. *How does my student's culture learn?*
5. *How does my student's culture resolve conflict?*
6. *How does my student's culture use symbols?*
7. *How does my student's culture celebrate accomplishments?*

Clearly, understanding ELL cultural backgrounds is a complex and multidimensional endeavor. However, this knowledge is essential to effectively teach culturally and linguistically diverse students.

**General Teaching Strategies:** ELL students need support and guidance in acquiring English language proficiency.

Teachers can deliver instruction that provides the appropriate level of support to ELL by differentiating *what they teach, how they teach* and *what they use as evidence of student learning*. By using a variety of procedural and instructional scaffolding techniques, teachers can offer students the support necessary to obtain English language proficiency and gain instructional independence.

## Procedural and Instructional Scaffolding



The list below represents a sampling of ELL teaching strategies. Additional unit/lesson ELL instructional recommendations are provided within the Teacher's Guide.

1. Emphasize and pre-teach key vocabulary.
2. Use non-verbal cues.
3. Explicitly link concepts to students' background experiences.
4. Be aware of your speaking style. Avoid difficult sentence construction and jargon.
5. Clearly explain lesson/activities tasks. Pacing is a key element in lesson delivery.
6. Provide frequent opportunities for interaction and discussion.
7. When possible use students' native language.
8. Create a visual vocabulary lesson/activity wall and/or chart.
9. Use procedural and instructional scaffolding techniques.
10. Encourage multiple grouping configurations.
11. Incorporate appropriate "wait time."
12. Provide feedback to students often.
13. Allow students to create their own unit/lesson picture dictionaries.
14. Develop and maintain regular routines. Use clear and consistent signals for classroom instructions.
15. When modeling for students write clearly, legibly, and in print.
16. Repeat information and review frequently