

Oral Language in Disciplinary Literacy Development

The Design and Implementation of Quality Teaching for English Learners
and a Large-Scale Effectiveness Study

Aida Walqui, Ph. D.
Director, Teacher Professional Development Program
WestEd
awalqui@wested.org



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Two main topics for my presentation

- The role of oral language in the development of English Language Learners academic concepts and skills
- The design and on-going evaluation of *Quality Teaching for English Language Learners* in 52 middle schools in California



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Literacy

The ability to produce and interpret a wide variety of texts, understanding their message, the messenger's point of view, the relationship of the interpreter to the message, and deciding how to respond in appropriate ways.

Because school knowledge becomes increasingly specialized, literacy becomes discipline-specific, and the language required to engage in literacy events takes on specialized features different from every day uses of language.

Literacy includes all the elements of speaking, listening, reading, writing, critical thinking, and the habits of mind that foster effective civic participation.



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Becoming literate in an L2

- Is a long-term developmental process. One does not learn the academic uses of a language at once nor does one always encounter the same level of academic texts.
- Process consists of constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with a wide variety of texts.
- Building academic repertoires requires conscious and deliberate investment by teachers and students
- The more readers take to the text, the more they derive from their literacy encounters.



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How does oral engagement support the acquisition of academic uses of English?

- It enables students to move between every day and specialized ways of interpreting new knowledge under development
- It allows learners to test hypothesis
- It helps them appropriate disciplinary knowledge in English
- It helps learners develop their discursive ability and personal voice
- It serves as auto-input



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The role of teachers

- To construct invitations that deliberately maximize opportunities for students to actively engage in discipline specific talk.
- To help students become aware of and reflect on how authors use language to convey their points of view or interpretive perspectives (Gibbons, 2009; Schleppegrell, 2009)
- To respond to students initially focusing on fluency and students appropriate use of the genre involved to then spiral back to issues of accuracy and complexity.



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The role of vocabulary development

Academic uses of English entail more than simply learning vocabulary:

- Word meaning is determined by the contexts in which words occur and by the grammatical and lexical features of texts
- Across different disciplines words in academic lists mean different things and vary in range and frequency (Hyland & Tse 2007)
- Vocabulary development is predicated on students having multiple opportunities to listen to and use new words meaningfully (Corson, 1997)



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Academic uses of English

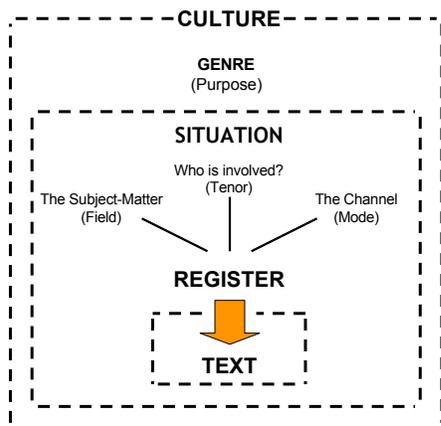
Involve constellations of features that together construct texts that are difficult for students because of:

- the *fields* of knowledge they appeal to
- the *tenor* of the interpersonal relationships they construct
- the modes in which students encounter them

These multiple variations result in academic language registers, or the linguistic variation that results according to contexts of use.



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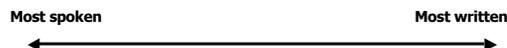
Derewianka, 1990



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Academic Uses of English Development Continuum

This development should be tracked over a unit of work that takes place over several classes.



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The Linguistics Unit

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Introduction: Language is a system of systems	Syntactic System in Languages	Sound System in Languages	Semantic System in Languages	Variation in Languages: Dialects, etc.
Explanatory Letter 1	Explanatory Letter 2	Explanatory Letter 3	Explanatory Letter 4	Explanatory Letter 5



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Two examples of points in this continuum

1. Tony DeFazio's 5 week Linguistics Unit
International High School, La Guardia Community College
Day 3 of first week
2. Alice Kintzer's 1 week Unit on Robert Frost
Ridgewood Intermediate School
New York City



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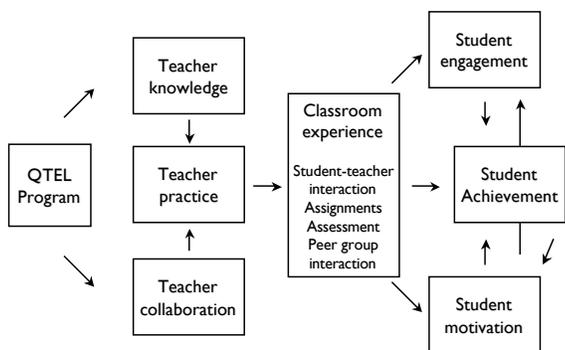
Key Intervention Components

Component	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Summer Professional Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 6th and 7th ELA and ESL teachers School site and district administrators 3 days in June 4 days in August QTEL Professional Developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 7th and 8th ELA and ESL teachers School site and district administrators 3 days in June 4 days in August QTEL Professional Developers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All 8th ELA and ESL teachers School site and district administrators 3 days in June 4 days in August QTEL Professional Developers
Coaching and in classroom support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6th grade participants Four individualized cycles per teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 7th grade participants Four individualized cycles per teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8th grade participants Four individualized cycles per teacher
Collaborative Implementation Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four to six after-school study sessions for all ELA and ESL teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four to six after-school study sessions for all ELA and ESL teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Four to six after-school study sessions for all ELA and ESL teachers
Research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conducted by Berkeley Policy Associates – (Dr. Hans Bos, PI) in coordination with REL-West 		



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Theoretical model



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Implementation Research

- In an effectiveness study it is critical to describe implementation fidelity in real-life program contexts
- Helps us to understand how and why an intervention works or does not
- Implementers face tension between adherence to a program model and need to adapt to different contexts
- Researchers face tension between describing program implementation and explaining variation in program impacts



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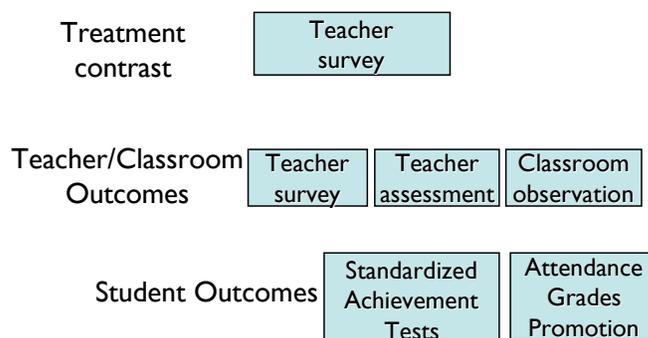
Unit of Random Assignment

- The point of random assignment determines the study's statistical power
- Larger units - More clustering - Less power
- Intervention that targets teacher collaboration requires school-level assignment
- Result: large and expensive study (52 schools, hundreds of teachers) that are sensitive to school-level attrition



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Our Study Outcomes



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Measurement Challenges

Teacher survey	• Designing a valid assessment • Alignment with the intervention
Teacher assessment	
Classroom observation	• Choosing a valid instrument
	• Alignment with the intervention • Training and reliability • Logistics and cost
Standardized Achievement Tests	• Sensitivity/validity • Availability • Data acquisition and transfer
Attendance, Grades, Promotion	

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Anthony DeFazio: Where do you want to go next?
Transcript

...

Tony: I want everybody paying attention to these five. It'll give us an idea about how different people started and where they think they are going to go. O.K.?

Girl Student: I'm writing this letter to you because I wanted to give you some advice about learning English. I know you are making progress on English (?) so I'm going to give you some advice of learning English from my own experience. First there is confusus (?) before going to the main part I want to tell you about this.

Tony: She edits as she reads,

Chorus: (laughter)

Girl Student: Since there aren't any exact definitions for the English, I am going to tell you what I think is the language.

TONY: Very nice beginning. You are so quiet today. O.K. how did she start?

Boy Student: Hi...

Tony: All right she started in a very friendly way. All right, but then how is she going to tell people from her own what?

Chorus: Experience

Tony: Experience, that's one way you can start something, an experience that's important to you. And that's what she's going to do. She's going to show I think, at least from what she said, how learning linguistics is helping her to learn English, O.K. you sure?

Lavinia: In humanities class we are learning linguistics and how we define a language. Every language has its characteristics, and some of them are sounds, alphabet, grammar and words. And also animals have their own language, they communicate by sounds, smell.

Tony: O.K. that's as far as you got, right? Where do you think you might go next with that?

Girl Student: I think we are going to talk a little more about the animal's communication. And then we are going to start with comparing our language and English.

Tony: O.K., so what you are trying to do is to give people what? Ladies and gentlemen?

Chorus: Description, characteristics,

Tony: or E, X, A...

Chorus: Examples

Tony: All right, examples, I am going to be looking for this, I am going to be looking for that. It's the same thing you look for.

Lavinia: The way we learn our first language is by hearing, repeating and remembering. We learn our second language by studying, also hearing and repeating, and being in a way forced to do it if we are in another country. I found from my research that animal communication is not a language. Animal communication is different from the human communication because in case of dolphins they communicate through ultrasonic voices that cannot be heard by the human ear. I don't think that there are languages better than other. This is about it, because I do not enough time. But I appreciate that you teach me these things and I consider you as the best teacher that I ever had in my life.

Tony: Amen, very nice job

Chorus: (Claps, laughs)

Julio: Animal communication is not a language. It is a language, that's what I think, because they are communicating with each other....

Lavinia: But they don't speak.

Chorus: (Lots of talking)

Julio: you can have words, sounds and everything....

Chorus: (Lots of talking)

Lavinia: But they don't have words....They don't say "mama."

Julio: ...characteristics, and in animal language, some of the characteristics that you said...so...it is a language.

Tony: Julio is arguing very strongly that animal communication is language, Lavinia is saying that it's not. What do you think is... would be a way to help them resolve that argument in their writing?

Lavinia: I mean they have sound, both of them. Because we have sound and they have sound.

Tony: But, wait. Do we need sound? Go ahead, Clara.

Clara: I heard people say that animals, they understand everything. But the only thing that they don't do, they don't speak.

Chorus: (Lots of talking! Discussing)

Boy Student: Look, if you want to say "excuse me", ahem, ahem (clears his throat).

Lavinia: They don't say "excuse me."

Chorus: (Lots of talking! Discussing)

Tony: Alright, alright, now hold on, hold on. Angela had a comment.

Angela: ...because they don't talk, but they...they...they communicate by doing signs so they don't need to speak to communicate to others. So I think...that's a language.

Tony: A lot is going to depend on how you define language. O.K.? You can define it in such a way as to exclude what animals do; you can define it in a very broad way, as a system of communication that includes everything. You are going to find linguists and zoologists who disagree, and if you get interested I can give you some readings that were in the journal *Science* last year, people arguing back and forth, calling one another names because they disagreed on this issue.

In Class

Julio: First of all I think that language is a way to inform others around you your feelings or just a simple thing that you want to let know people what is the deal. And it can be expressed by saying it, watching a picture or hearing it, you know what I'm saying? I don't know if you have heard about the kangaroo rat that stamps its feet to communicate with other rats. Its really funny 'cause we humans have more characteristics to communicate to each other, but we still have problems to understand other people. Characteristics like sound, grammar, pictures and body language are some of them, while the rat only uses the foot (he stamps the ground)

Tony: Excellent!

Class: (claps)

Tony: I never even heard about the kangaroo rat. Nice job, nice job.

Alice Kinzer Transcript

The whole group considers what original quote to add to their poster.

- S1: I know. The quote can be, “I need to look more than a road”?
S2: It’s supposed to be like a decision... We should write a little bit like a hard word, you know?...How about this, “And then looked down far as I could...How about this, how about, “I looked far for the right decision”? No, it has to rhyme!
S1: Oh, I know.
S2: Do you remember how they said to...
S1: I need to look something more than I wrote
S2: So start drawing
S1: (turns to S4) Help me?

The two boys start to create the poster illustration while the two girls focus on the original quote.

- S2: How about this, “I’m Robert Frost, I’ve got to decide, which path to take, right or wrong.” No, “right or wrong” ruined it. (begins writing in a notebook) “I’m Robert Frost...I’m Robert Frost, I have to choose, but it’s difficult for me, Robert Frost, to find the truth.”
S3: I don’t know, write it, write it. Write all of it, then we can fix it.
S2: “I’m Robert Frost, I have a path to choose. It’s hard for me,”
S3: “Robert Frost,”
S2: “to find the truth.” It’s like a rap.
S3 Let me see (reading from the notebook), “I’m Robert Frost, I have a path to choose,”
S2: “it’s hard for me, Robert Frost, to find the truth.” Like, “truth” and “Frost” kind of go together...

The conversation turns to a discussion of why S1 included a train station in the poster.

- S1: Maybe now we can make...the train station.
S3: Train station? What for? Why? What do you mean?
S1: (Student adds a train track to the poster)

S1: Yeah. Something like that

S3: I don’t understand. Why would you put a road, I mean a train station in woods?
Jose.

- S1: Because it’s a road.
S3: But it’s not a road. It’s a road, like you walk
S1: I know. That’s why.

S3: How can you walk in a place where trains go by?

S3: Yeah, make the roads go two different ways

S1: And this is where he...he come here...because this is like the first one.

S3: And he's standing right here

S1: Yeah, maybe. I'm going to make a question mark right here

S3: Yeah

S1: Because he don't know.

S3: He doesn't know which way to go.

S1: So, here is where he stops and he says wait. Why don't you go this way or this way? And he comes this way because this is the shortest one. So he get the easy one and he made it to the village.

The conversation between the two girls resumes:

S2: Oh, oh! "to choose the good or to choose the wrong."

S3: Uh, "to choose the right or to choose the wrong."

S2: Yeah, yeah, "to choose the right or to choose the wrong."

S3: But he doesn't know which one is wrong...

S2: Okay, "I'm Robert Frost, I have a path to choose, (writing the new ending) it's up to me to find the truth."

S1 explains to S4 how he will add to the poster

The conversation resumes with the two girls.

S3: Better. I think this one makes more sense and it explains more.

S2: Yeah, but he still needs to choose, "to choose the right or to choose the wrong."

S3: Wait.

S2: No, no, now it doesn't make sense, "to choose the right or to choose the wrong."

S3: It doesn't make sense because he doesn't know which one is right, which one is wrong. That's the point of asking himself which way to go.

S2: How about, "I gotta choose now, or I might be"

S3: I think this one's better.

S2: Okay, how about this, "I might choose one, but I might be wrong."

S3: Yeah. Write it, write it fast. "I might choose one, but I might be wrong."

S2: (writing) Keep repeating it.

S3: "I might choose right, but I might be wrong."

S2: "I'm Robert Frost, I have a path to choose. I might choose the right, but I might be" (puzzled)

S3: "wrong."

S1 explains the poster to S2 and S3

S1: This is Franz and my idea. We make this because he...and we make the question mark here so because he is standing right here in the middle to know which way to go and then we did like that and come over here too because so they cannot...very far.

S4: It's going to look nice because it's...

S3: Okay, so it goes like this, whatever...and it still comes here. And he comes to the place that he wants to.

S4: It goes like that.

S1: We made this because he came here. Because look, he said I took the less traveled. So this is the less traveled of this. (he traces the road with his hands on the poster)

S3: Because this one is long and this one is short (pointing at the poster)

S1: Yeah, that's why he picked this one. (pointing at the poster)

The two girls continue with the quote

S2: Okay, "I'm Robert Frost, I have a path to choose. I might choose the right, but I might be...?"

S3: (pointing to notebook) This is good until this part. We have to think up of the ending.

S2: "I might choose the right, but I might be..." Only "wrong" goes there.

S3: Where's the dictionary? (S2 leaves group)

S2: Yeah.

The boys have finished their illustration and become interested in the problem completing the original quote.

S4: Rhyme something with "right" instead of "wrong."

S3: I know.

S1: And it gotta rhyme. (S2 returns with the teacher)

S3: We think that after the "right" part, it's right, but we don't know.

S2: (reading) "I'm Robert Frost, I have a path to choose. I might choose the right, but it might be"

T: "but it might be wrong."

S3: But it doesn't rhyme.

T: You want it to rhyme?

S2: Yeah.

T: "It might be right. I might choose the right," the path that's right? Uhm, why don't you use homophones? What's a homophone for right?

S2: (writing in the air) Write.

T: So what did he do in his life?

S2: "I might choose the right, but I might be..."

S1: "I might choose the right road so I can write."

- T: Use a homophone. (the teacher leaves)
S3: "I might choose the right that might help me write."
S2: (writing it down)
S1: We've got 5 minutes
S3: That's funny
S3: "I'm Robert Frost. I have a path to choose. I might choose the right that help me write."
S3: Yeah, that's good
S2: Considering. Because he did choose a path and he started writing.
S3: "Yeah, but he chose the path that have to do with his writing."
S3: So...It doesn't matter, just start writing
S3: It doesn't matter...

Group presents the poster to the class:

- S3: The quote we choose from the poem was, "And looked down one as far as I could."
S2: And the one that we made was, "I'm Robert Frost, I have a path to choose. I might choose the right that might help me write."
S3: We used a homophone.
T: Good, you sure did
S2: And we drew a picture
S1: And the picture is about Robert Frost. He is right there trying to know where he is going to go
S4: The question mark means that he is standing there and trying to pick a path.
S1: And we did this so he went this because he went this way because it was the shortest one...and we did like that and over here...and this was the biggest one...like the long road.
S4: Path
S1: Yeah, and we did the trees because he was like in the middle of the... not the forest like (T: woods)...woods
T1: Okay, thank you.