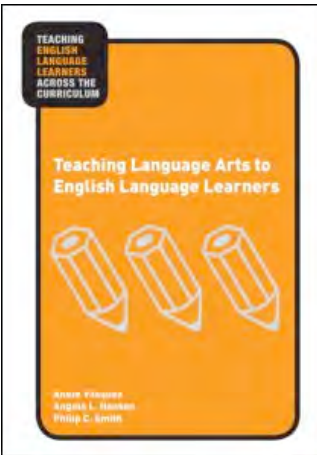


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Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners			
Author:	Anete Vasquez, Angela L. Hansen, Philip C. Smith (2010)		
Publisher:	New York: Routledge		
Pages	ISBN	Price	
198 pages	978-0415995320	\$33.26 U.S.	



Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners is one of a series of books (*Teaching Mathematics to English Language Learners, Teaching Social Studies to English Language Learners, etc.*) published by Routledge. It is designed to be a stand alone, comprehensive guide for both first-time and experienced U.S.A.-based ESL teachers, concentrating on the subject of language arts.

Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners is divided into three main sections. The first section “presents an overview of theory and research on [ESL] teaching and learning... [and] reviews research with an eye to providing guidance for the design and teaching of school programs.” It is written for non-ESL teachers and serves as a great introduction for teachers who have had little or no previous ESL experience.

The second section “summarizes the limited research base of [language arts]-focused research and creates a transition between the general information of [section] one and the [language arts] activities of [section] three.” It is by far the shortest of the three sections, but does an excellent job of explaining how language arts, as opposed to mathematics or science, is the subject most closely linked with the success or failure of an ESL student.

The third section is filled with “learning activities in the main areas of the [language arts] curriculum.” It is further divided into eight subsection (nine, including the

introduction) that each focus on a specific skill, such as writing, grammar or vocabulary development. Each activity is rated on a scale of one to four, one being preproduction (ESL students unfamiliar with English) and four being intermediate fluency, and guides a teacher on how to adjust the activity for differing levels.

This book is a must have for any U.S. language arts teacher who faces the prospect of including ESL students into his/her classroom. *Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners* flows seamlessly from ESL theory to practical classroom application. This book even contains an easy to use glossary to help those unfamiliar with ESL jargon and terminology to help ease the into the ESL world.

While the subject matter can be a little weighty, making for heavy reading in the beginning, it is masterfully broken up with real world vignettes to help the reader place the information in context. As the book itself points out, learning the theories behind teaching ESL can be difficult because of the controversy and contention surrounding leading experts' opinions on best practices. However, the various prevailing theories are thoroughly broken down, explained and compared in a way that teachers that have not previously been exposed to ESL can understand.

Because the world of ESL education is still growing and evolving, *Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners* is up front and honest that it does not contain a comprehensive or exhaustive treatise on the subject. To that end, it provides a large list of additional resources, including an extensive list of Internet resources.

One of this book's greatest strengths is its ability to bridge the gap between the novice and experienced ESL teacher. I specialized in ESL education during my graduate licensure program, so many of the theories and practices presented in *Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners* were not new to me, but I still found great value in it as a resource and lesson guide.

New ESL teachers will find a tremendous amount of value in the first section of the book as it walks them through what they can expect from their ESL students. It explains that each ESL student is different and has different needs. Factors such as a student's native country/culture, level of culture shock, motivation and previous exposure to English all play a role in their learning style and needs.

I would have to say that *Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners* only short coming is that it focuses very heavily on beginning and intermediate level ESL students, but fails to provide an exit strategy. The activities presented are not always well suited for high level ESL students and no high level activates are provided. While intermediate fluency allows an ESL student sound like a native or near native in everyday conversation, it still falls short when it comes to academic English, which is vital for higher education at the undergraduate and graduate level beyond high school. Essentially, the book does a wonderful job helping teachers get ESL students started on the road to native and academic fluency, but fails to provide directions mapping out the final leg of the journey.

Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners is a new book (2010) and I wish it had been available when I started my career as an ESL teacher. I was tossed head first

into the deep end of teaching EFL as I traveled outside the U.S.A. to live and work, and this book would have made a fantastic flotation device. Whereas I floundered and learned by trial and error, new ESL teachers in the U.S.A. and EFL teachers in non-U.S. contexts can use this book to give themselves a head start and avoid needless mistakes and heartache.

Overall, I would recommend *Teaching Language Arts to English Language Learners* to any teacher even remotely associated with English learners. The introduction to theories and practices are critical for new ESL teachers and the lesson ideas, activities and Internet resource guide are valuable to even the most experienced ESL teachers. I know I will keep it in my permanent collocation for many years to come.

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