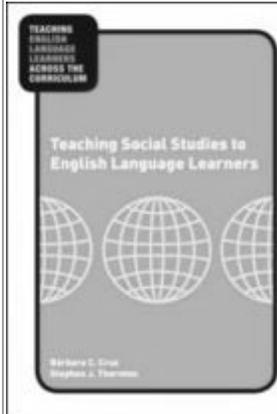


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Teaching Social Studies to English Language Learners		
Author:	Bárbara C. Cruz & Stephen J. Thornton (2008)	
Publisher:	New York: Routledge	
Pages	ISBN	Price
Pp. xvii + 238	978-0-415-95761-8 (paper)	\$36.95 U.S.



In *Teaching Social Studies to English Language Learners*, Bárbara Cruz and Stephen Thornton present a practical guide to working with ELLs in the social studies classroom. This book is part of the series *Teaching English Language Learners Across the Curriculum*. Other books in the series cover the arts, science, language arts, mathematics, and career and technical education. Additionally, there is a book in the series that is a guide to using technology when teaching ESL students.

While the learning activities suggested in *Teaching Social Studies to English Language Learners* are intended for middle and high school classrooms, there are some activities that can be modified for use at other grade levels. Moreover, while the activities are designed to help English Language Learners, they can benefit any student struggling to understand the content. This resource can also be beneficial for ESL teachers, administrators, and curriculum coordinators. The book is divided into three main parts and then one final section that includes a list of resources and a glossary. The book is laid out in a logical order that can be easily navigated.

In “Part 1: Your English Language Learner,” Tony Erben presents a brief introduction on working with English language learners. Erben summarizes major theories about ESL instruction in a way that is accessible for all teachers regardless of how limited their work with ELLs may have been. Included in this part of the book are sections describing the process of language acquisition, how to select an ESL program for a school, how to foster English language development, the stages of cultural adjustment, how to develop a culturally

responsive classroom, and the characteristics of ELL parents. The final section of Part 1 offers advice on working with ELLs with special needs since these students face multiple challenges in the traditional classroom. The suggestions in Part I are research-based and can be applied to multiple subject areas.

In “Part 2: Principles of Social Studies Teaching and Learning,” Cruz and Thornton describe the basics of social studies instruction. Specific sections within Part 2 describe effective social studies instruction and research-based suggestions on working with ESL students in the social studies classroom. The authors describe how to implement instructional activities such as using graphic organizers, facilitating simulations, and incorporating visuals. Furthermore, they describe a variety of assessments that can be used such as alternative writing assignments, product-based learning, and portfolios.

“Part 3: Teaching Social Studies” goes beyond the basic suggestions offered in Part 2 and describes possible learning activities in great detail. The activities are categorized into various social studies topics including geography, United States history, world history, government and civics, economics, the behavioral sciences, and controversial issues. Each topic begins with a discussion about appropriate types of instruction for that topic as well as challenges that can emerge within these specific social studies courses. Many of the activities in Part 3 incorporate cooperative learning and primary sources analysis.

Cruz and Thornton recognize that not all English language learners are the same in terms of their level of language development. Because of this, they include a description of the four levels of speech emergence: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, and intermediate fluency. Included with each suggested activity is a note about the appropriate levels for the activity and ways that it could be modified for various levels. Additionally, some activities include a chart outlining the “questioning strategy” that could be used. The charts include one block for each of the four levels of speech emergence and appropriate questions for each level.

In addition to detailed descriptions of the classroom activities, the authors have also included images of various primary sources as well as specific locations of the sources, resources for background information, extension activities, alternative activities, teaching tips, and graphic organizers. Including the specific location of primary sources makes the book especially convenient for teachers since they do not have to spend time searching for the appropriate instructional materials to put the learning activities into practice.

The list of resources at the end of the book is extensive and includes Internet, print, and student resources. The authors have included descriptions of websites as well as the title of the resource in the event that the URL changes. The resources range from cultural resources to ESL textbooks to resources on gifted ELL students. Websites where teachers can find online support are also included. The detailed glossary is a great source of instant information for those new to ESL instruction.

While resources related to differentiated instruction were included, a nice addition would have been some specific resources about creating cooperative learning environments since so

many of the activities involve some form of cooperative learning. This type of instruction can be challenging for some teachers.

While the book is very helpful for busy classroom teachers who need ideas that can be immediately put into practice, it also provides a sound basis for creating long-term success for working with ELLs. Preservice and novice teachers can find effective strategies, but the book should also prove useful to veteran teachers working with ELLs for the first time or simply looking for new ideas.

One other great benefit is that while learning activities pertain to very specific topics such as the Lewis and Clark expedition or voting rights, teachers could easily switch out the suggested primary sources while still using the same lesson format in order to cover other time periods or topics. While it would be impossible to suggest learning activities to cover each social studies course in its entirety, the formats of the suggested activities are adaptable. This makes it possible for teachers to create entirely different lessons with just a few modifications. This feature of the book makes it a valuable resource that teachers can come back to again and again.

Overall, the book is a solid resource for any social studies teacher, but especially those with English language learners in their classrooms. As mentioned earlier, the book contains strategies that are effective for all students. Educators ranging from the preservice level to those with many years of experience will find practical ideas that can be applied easily. The book is well organized and user friendly making it easy for teachers to find what they need quickly. Cruz and Thornton have created a useful guide that will help teachers create nurturing environments where their ESL students can achieve academic success.

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