

Show, Tell, Build: Twenty Key Instructional Tools and Techniques for Educating English Learners

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Show, Tell, Build: Twenty Key Instructional Tools and Techniques for Educating English Learners		
Author:	Joyce Nutta, Carine Strelbel, Florin Mihai, Edwidge Bryant, & Kouider Mokhtari (2017)	
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Teachers of English learners (ELs) are first responders to language proficiency challenges that exist within mainstream classrooms. As an approach to the nationwide concern of bridging the achievement gap, educators determine EL students’ varying proficiency levels, then carefully select and integrate instructional practices to support their success. The desire to increase academic gains through the use of strategic teaching methods and research-based practices is a priority for teachers interested in effective English language teaching. *Show, Tell, Build: Twenty Key Instructional Tools and Techniques for Educating English Learners* discusses effective instructional practices that are essential for teaching in K-12 settings and supports the specific needs of ELs within a collaborative learning environment.

The related components of *Show, Tell, Build* provide pre-, peri-, and post-teaching tools for EL-integrated classrooms. The book consists of an introduction and two main parts with each part containing ten chapters. In the Introduction, the authors thoroughly explain the need for EL strategies in today’s classrooms. Part I begins with the Academic Subjects Protocol (ASP), which includes major factors involved in teaching academic subjects to ELs. Part II, the Language Arts Protocol (LAP), begins by highlighting key elements in teaching Language Arts and Literacy. Each part focuses on a separate model for planning, implementing, and differentiating instruction for ELs.

In the Introduction, the authors explain how to “more precisely” address the various needs of ELs by adhering to six characteristics: current levels of English proficiency, current age/grade level, literacy in the first language, first language and its features, previous education inside or outside the United States, and cultural and experiential background (Nutta, Strelbel, Mihai, Bryant, & Mokhtari, 2018, p. 2). These important characteristics help teachers understand their students and

deliberate on appropriate instructional approaches for their students' specific needs. The authors suggest that an approach involving the ASP and LAP can be used to help classroom teachers juggle and balance the needs of their ELs.

Part I focuses on the ASP model, which explains ten *show and tell* techniques that draw attention to two key types of communication support: verbal and nonverbal. The chapters include: Graphic Organizers for Academic Subjects (Chapter 1); Infographics, Diagrams, and Animations (Chapter 2); Models, Manipulatives, and Realia (Chapter 3); Gestures, Dramatization, and Total Physical Response (Chapter 4); Teacher Talk (Chapter 5); Leveled Questioning (Chapter 6); Cooperative Learning and Academic Discussions (Chapter 7); Leveled Text (Chapter 8); Modified Text (Chapter 9); Sentence Starters, Sentence Frames, and Word Banks (Chapter 10). Using Chapter 6 as an example of a *show and tell* technique (i.e., leveled questioning), the teacher leads a discussion about the Statue of Liberty and poses questions intended to target different proficiency levels to elicit and expand verbal and nonverbal responses. Beginning learners are asked to point to an image (e.g., *Where is the statue?*). Intermediate learners are asked to explain and elaborate their answers in simple terms (e.g., *What does the Statue of Liberty symbolize? Can you explain your answer?*). Advanced learners are asked questions that may require paraphrasing or contextual background knowledge during the explanation (e.g., *Has America lived up to the ideals represented by the Statue of liberty? Can you elaborate?*; Nutta et al., 2018). This technique poses questions phrased at different levels of oral proficiency, eliciting and expanding students' verbal and nonverbal responses in ongoing communication.

Part II focuses on the LAP model, which explains ten build techniques targeted to ELs oral proficiency and literacy levels. The chapters include: Building Comprehension at Word, Sentence, and Discourse Levels (Chapter 11); Instructional Conversations (Chapter 12); Learning New Language through Songs and Poems (Chapter 13); EL Spoken Error Treatment (Chapter 14); Exploring the Meaning, Form, and Relationships of Words (Chapter 15); Grammatically Unpacking Sentences (Chapter 16); Understanding Text Structures with Graphic Organizers (Chapter 17); Grammar, Spelling, and Vocabulary Mini-Lessons (Chapter 18); Responding to Sentence-Level Writing Errors (Chapter 19); Planning Writing with Graphic Organizers (Chapter 20). Using songs and poems to scaffold language is an example of a *build* technique in Chapter 13. "Flint," a poem by Christina Rossetti with simple style and language, is used. The teacher reads the poem aloud and taps her hand on the table using a slow beat. The teacher then rereads each line, pointing to key words and placing emphasis on pronunciation with explanation of unfamiliar words, "*Em-uh-ruhld, roo-bee...*" and invites the class to read along. In groups, students recite the lines with the teacher and then take turns reading the poem in pairs. Following this, the teacher focuses on the meaning of each line; "*An emerald is as green as grass'. What does this mean?*" The teacher explains and then continues to point, gesture, and define key vocabulary. After confirming comprehension, the teacher leads a discussion with students of the poem's overall meaning. By the end of the lesson, the class has recited the poem rhythmically and individually. This group activity provides students with an engaging learning experience involving and constructing the four "P's" of targeted language and literacy instruction: Pitch, Pace, Portion, and Perspective. The authors intend for *build* techniques to be used in a series of interactions with students in order to create rich language experiences, learning literacy skills and cultural knowledge (Nutta et al., 2018). This technique is used to develop and target ELs' oral proficiency and literacy levels, which is the basis of the Language Arts Protocol.

Show, Tell, Build includes carefully selected approaches and models to promote student success and draws on research-based protocols that can be applied within the EL learning environment. The structure of the book is skillfully crafted into a comprehensive guide which blends crucial aspects

of language instruction. It provides readers a glimpse of realistic teaching and learning experiences between teachers and ELs in diverse language classrooms, and the content is user-friendly. The recommended techniques can be used with different proficiency levels, which make it easier for teachers to implement into their daily classroom instruction.

Although the book covers many aspects of teaching ELs, the authors could have expanded upon the idea of teachers using the techniques in layers. As each technique should build upon another, the techniques were only addressed separately, which may be challenging when working with various proficiency levels. Examples of using the techniques simultaneously would clarify how they work together and in sequence. Also, presenting details of actual studies and analyses could have revealed the strengths and level of effectiveness of the tools and techniques provided in each chapter. As they were tested in elementary, middle, and high school classrooms, the authors should specify which tools and techniques work best according to grade level, assuming the reader has little or no preparation in teaching ELs in the integrated classroom.

Overall, *Show, Tell, Build* is a valuable resource to EL teachers and other stakeholders. The content is organized and accessible. Not only does it present a significant instructional framework, but it also provides extensive knowledge and guidance for lesson planning and implementation guidelines for the ASP and LAP in an EL integrated classroom.

References

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