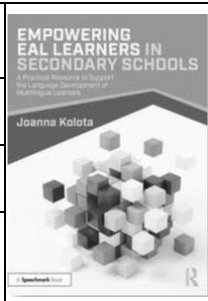


## Empowering EAL Learners in Secondary Schools: A Practical Resource to Support the Language Development of Multilingual Learners

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Empowering EAL Learners in Secondary Schools: A Practical Resource to Support the Language Development of Multilingual Learners		
<b>Author:</b>	Joanna Kolota (2024)	
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Recent geo-political upheavals have increased migration to English-speaking countries, creating significant challenges for K-12 educators. The percentage of English as an additional language (EAL) students in U.S. public schools, for example, increased from 9.4 percent in 2011 to 10.6 percent in 2021 (National Center of Education Statistics, 2024). Similar trends have been reported in Canada, with the number of EAL students in Canadian K-12 schools continuing to increase (e.g., Le Pinchon et al., 2024). Supporting these students effectively in their academic pursuits is essential to helping them develop the skills they need in order to participate fully in society. Because many scholars (e.g., Grapin & Lee, 2022; Santibañez & Gándara, 2018) suggest that secondary teachers often fall short of the requisite knowledge to support these students, Joanna Kolota’s book *Empowering EAL Learners in Secondary Schools: A Practical Resource to Support the Language Development of Multilingual Learners* is a timely and relevant resource to address the status quo. The focus of this book is pedagogical strategies to help secondary (EAL) learners develop English language skills.

The book provides readers with concrete ideas about how to support EAL students in learning English by building strong vocabulary, crafting effective sentences, as well as developing effective reading and writing skills. Anchoring on a content-integrated approach to teaching

English (e.g., Stoller & Fitzsimmons-Doolan, 2017), each chapter focuses on a distinct aspect of support for EAL learners. For example, Kolota equips readers to evaluate student needs and learning patterns by providing some background characteristics of various groups of EAL learners with references to major first- and second-language learning theories. She also provides three tiers of vocabulary for EAL learners, together with principles and classroom practices for teaching them. Additionally, the author unpacks the process of constructing meaningful sentences and the importance of being aware of this process when teaching EAL students.

Other major themes of the book relate to developing reading and writing skills. The author introduces various strategies for the former, including using graphic organizers to provide students with key ideas and the sequence of information embedded in the text, cohesion, and the use of pictures or visuals to help transcend language difficulties. Kolota also discusses what she describes as the processes of “simplification” and “easification” for EAL students. According to the author, “simplification” entails transforming structurally complex sentences into simpler chunks, while “easification” relates to involving various multimodal means such as illustrations, flowcharts, and graphic organizers, to help EAL students deconstruct the texts to derive meanings. She argues that teachers should adopt both strategies as the context may require. When discussing writing instruction, the author introduces fairly common strategies such as graphic organizers and substitution tables, adopting an approach to instruction that emphasizes language rather than rhetorical style or genre aspects of writing pedagogy. The book also explores a variety of other instructional strategies for writing, including dictation, dictogloss, transformation dictation, and the use of sentence starters.

A major strength of this book is that the author has integrated a variety of subject area texts for explanation of the teaching strategies discussed. Readers may notice that there is an explicit focus on using a content-integrated approach to teaching English in the classroom. For example, the author has used texts from subjects such as English language arts, social studies/history, and science as a way to explain various teaching strategies. This situates the book uniquely, as not only EAL teachers but also teachers in other subject areas with a large number of EAL students may find the text worth consulting for helpful teaching strategies that they can use in their respective contexts. Another strength is that the book mostly avoids dense theoretical discussion, making it easily accessible to pre- and in-service teachers. It is primarily focused on practical classroom techniques designed by someone who has the experience of teaching secondary EAL students in an actual classroom. The book does not assume readers have a great deal of EAL background knowledge. As such, in-service teachers without formal preparation for teaching EAL can use the book as a resource, while pre-service teachers with or without EAL backgrounds can use the book as an essential text in a teacher education program.

As with any book, a single text may not be sufficient to meet all reader expectations and unique student needs; this book is no exception. Those not familiar with a content-integrated approach, or conceptually not aligned with activities derived from such an approach, however, may find the book somewhat lacking. For example, teachers looking for grammar rules for giving explicit grammar-focused feedback when teaching writing may have to adopt supplemental texts. Another weakness of the book is that while the author acknowledges the complexity of secondary EAL classrooms, there is little that the book actually offers in addressing such complexities, other than providing, by and large, generalized practices for teaching English.

For example, the book does not offer specific techniques for teaching mixed-grade or mixed-proficiency EAL students, EAL students who have little to no English or literacy backgrounds such as refugees, or EAL students who do not have the requisite spoken English skills to communicate academic matters with teachers. Consequently, one area that readers may find somewhat underwhelming is a lack of detailed discussion or a breakdown of how teachers are expected to use the pedagogical strategies and activities discussed with students across a wide range of individual differences.

Despite certain limitations, *Empowering EAL Learners in Secondary Schools* is a great resource that secondary teachers and teacher educators may consider consulting to update their understanding or add to their existing teaching repertoires. The book would be a valuable companion for pre- and in-service secondary teachers with or without specialized preparation for teaching EAL learners, teacher educators, and EAL program and curriculum developers.

### About the Author

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