CHAPTER 6

Interaction

Learning Outcomes

After reading, discussing, and engaging in activities related to this chapter, you will be able to meet the following **content** and **language objectives**.

Content Objectives

Select a variety of activities that promote interaction and incorporate them into lesson plans.

Design grouping structures that support lesson content and language objectives.

Identify techniques to increase wait time.

List ways that CCSS collaborative conversations and discussions are aligned with the Interaction component.

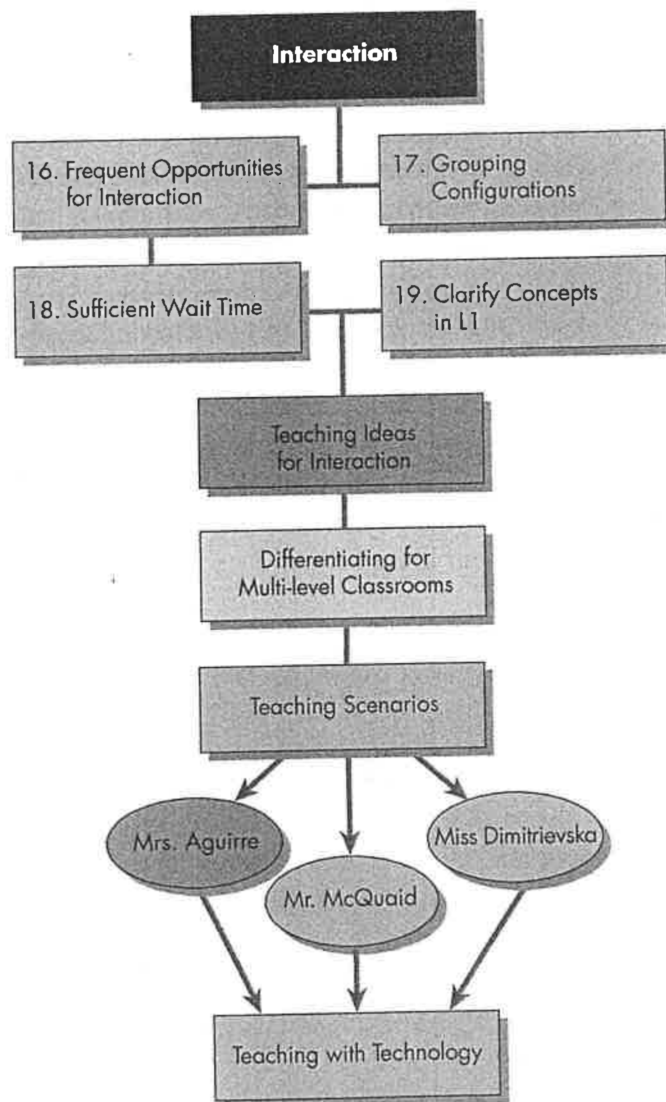
Identify resources to support student clarification in the native language.

Language Objectives

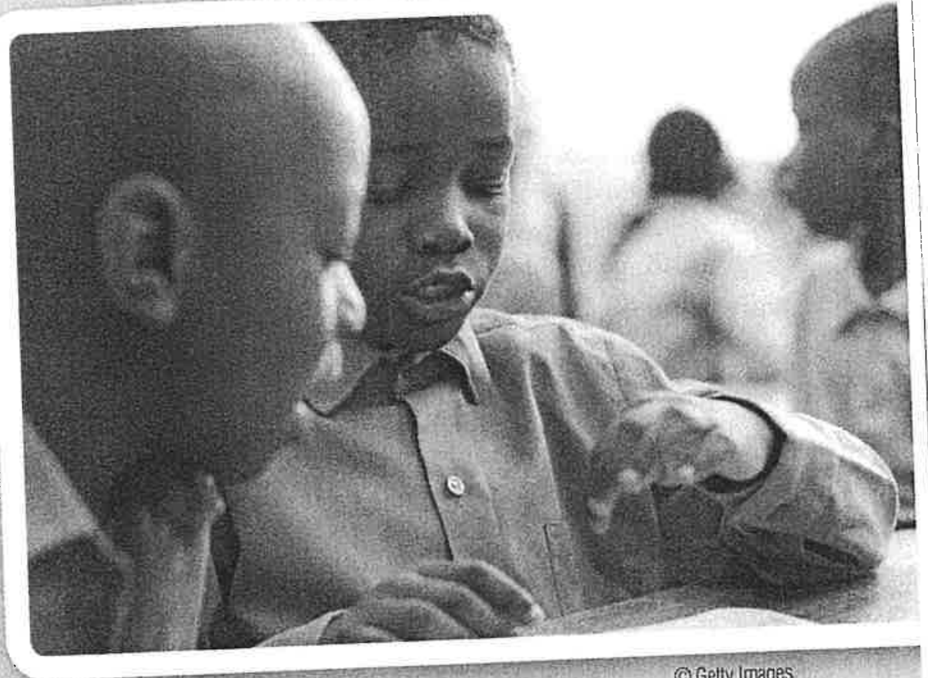
Explain in writing the purpose of student–student interaction for language development.

Describe techniques to reduce the amount of teacher talk in a lesson.

Practice asking questions that promote student elaboration of responses.



Talking, matters for learning. In fact, talking, listening, and thinking are a powerful combination of processes associated with learning, and each strengthens the others (City, 2014). It has never been more important to provide students with opportunities for talking, listening, and thinking in class about concepts, ideas, and information. At the same time that CCSS and other state standards have expectations that students will **engage** in substantive, collaborative discussions around text and concepts, outside of the classroom, students are increasingly communicating with electronic devices rather than face to face, and they aren't as exposed to extended discourse as they might have been a few years ago. The style of communication used is typically abbreviated messages that lack pragmatics (linguistic context clues such as nonverbal cues, turn-taking, and negotiating meaning) and are delivered while multitasking rather than focusing on the discussion (Rosen, 2012). The only opportunity many students have for quality talk around texts and topics is in the classroom. ●



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Short and Echevarría (2016) discuss a number of benefits of collaborative academic discussions. As students talk about a topic, they have the opportunity to try out new words, grammatical structures, and language functions (see Chapter 2 for examples of language functions). They also learn from peers who have more advanced language proficiency, those "more capable others" who provide support for **English learners'** understanding (Vygotsky, 1978). Participation in discussions with peers provides the language practice time that English learners need. When working with the whole group, students have few opportunities for practice, but conversation time increases significantly when working in partners or groups of 3–4 students.

For English learners to understand and use academic English, they need to be provided with structured opportunities for practice in all subject areas throughout the school day, not just during a designated time. With the CCSS and other state standards' emphasis on high levels of language use, *all* teachers are teachers of English language development, even if students also have access to excellent **ESL** specialists. The integration of language development across the curriculum is vital

and is recognized by some states as part of their instructional framework (California Department of Education, 2014). As students are learning in and through a new language—English—teachers must create ample opportunities to practice using ***academic* language**, not just **social English**. It is recommended that English learners have daily opportunities to talk about content in pairs or small groups, practicing and extending material already taught (Baker, et al., 2014). Unfortunately, this is typically not the case. In a classroom observation study, there was evidence of "academic dialog and discussion" in only .5% of the 1,500 classrooms observed (Schmoker, 2006).

For many teachers it may be challenging to move from presenting whole-class instruction to providing the kinds of small-group opportunities needed for students to have high-quality discussions. Sharing responsibility for learning with students working in small groups or with partners is an adjustment for many teachers, but it can make a significant impact on learning. Researchers have found that English learners were more engaged academically when working in small groups or with partners than they were in whole-class instruction or individual work (Brooks & Thurston, 2010). For students to connect with school and engage in learning at a level that will result in high achievement, we need to provide them with opportunities to interact with one another, to discuss and "puzzle over" genuine problems (Wiggins & McTighe, 2008). In this chapter, we present ways that teachers can use interaction to launch students to higher levels of English proficiency, improve academic outcomes, and meet standards including the **Common Core State Standards**.

Watch this video as Dr. MaryEllen Vogt discusses the importance of interaction. What does she say about ensuring sufficient time for students to interact with one another? How might you provide more time for interaction with your students?

Background

"Use it or lose it" is a saying that conveys what we know from our own experience in learning a second language. If one doesn't practice using the language, it is difficult to maintain it. But what about learning a language in the first place—does speaking it help to develop the language? The answer is a resounding "Yes!" The role that conversation plays in the process of second language teaching and learning is clear. But discussion also offers important benefits for learning in general. As Gerald Graff puts it, "Talk—about books and subjects—is as important educationally as are the books and subjects themselves" (2003, p. 9).

The issue is, why are there so few opportunities for students to interact in typical classrooms? Studies indicate that in most classrooms, teachers dominate the linguistic aspect of the lesson, leaving students severely limited in terms of opportunities to use language in a variety of ways (Cazden, 2001; Goodlad, 1984; Marshall, 2000). In a study with English learners (Porath, 2014), the teacher learned that by talking less and listening more, she was able to gain deeper insight into her student's learning needs and strengths. In our own work, we observe teachers doing a significant amount of talking rather than providing the impetus for a discussion and then listening to what students have to say, to the teacher or one another.

There are many benefits to having students actively engaged in interaction around subject matter. Some include:

- **Deeper understanding of text, including vocabulary learning.** When teachers use thoughtful questioning to promote discussion, it encourages students to think

critically about the passage. In doing so, students also think more deeply about the meaning of the words they encounter. (Echevarría, 1995; Saunders & Goldenberg, 1999; Wasik & Iannone-Campbell, 2012). Also, new understandings are co-constructed through interactions (Fisher & Frey, 2013; McIntyre et al., 2010).

- **Oral language development.** Being exposed to and interacting with language that is just beyond their independent speaking levels move students to higher **levels of language proficiency**. However, these interactions must be carefully planned and carried out to yield gains in oral language (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).
- **Brain stimulation.** Interesting, engaging activities, including discussions, play an important role in learning. When students are engaged and their brains are activated, more of the pleasure structures in the brain fire than when students are simply asked to memorize information (Jensen, 2008; Poldrack et al., 2001).
- **Increased motivation.** Interaction with others is an important component of reading instruction that increases motivation and comprehension (Guthrie & Ozgungor, 2002).
- **Reduced risk.** The typical question-answer sessions in which teachers call on students may be threatening to students, particularly those unprepared to respond. Some students cannot focus on the content in this setting because it triggers the brain's "threat response" (Jensen, 2005, 2008). Having young students talk in pairs or in small groups minimizes the risk and allows ideas to flow more easily.
- **More processing time.** Students need time to process after learning. Direct instruction should be limited to short increments followed by time for discussion.
- **Increased attention.** Use of pairs or teams can heighten attention levels. Students may be asked to work together to compare/contrast material learned, group and regroup the material, resequence it, or retell it from another point of view (Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001).

We find that it is both interesting and helpful to analyze actual transcripts from lessons to demonstrate the kind of teacher dominance that is so common in classrooms. The following transcripts are from a pilot SIOP study (Echevarría, Greene, & Goldenberg, 1996) in sixth-grade social studies classes. The teachers were videotaped teaching the same content about consumerism to English learners, with the first using a typical approach found in general education classes and the other using SIOP. Both classes had approximately 25 students, and in this lesson students were learning how to read labels on clothing and on a bottle of antiseptic.

Typical Lesson

TEACHER: Look at the piece of clothing at the bottom. It says (*he reads*), "This shirt is flame-resistant," which means what?

STUDENT: Could not burn.

STUDENT: Won't catch fire.

TEACHER: It will not burn, won't catch fire. Right (*continues reading*). "To retain the flame-resistant properties"—what does "to retain" mean?

TEACHER: Very good. Don't put it in your mouth, ears, and eyes. Okay, for how many days should you use it? No more than what?

STUDENT: No more than 10 days.

STUDENT: Ten days.

TEACHER: So don't use it—you have to follow what it says—so don't use it more than 10 days. Now, the next activity you're going to do …

The SIOP teacher allowed for a balance of teacher-to-student talk and encouraged student participation. She asked questions, waited for students' responses, and restated or elaborated on the responses. In this case, what did the teacher do to elicit answers to the question? She **scaffolded** the answer by encouraging the students to think about it, prompting them to give their responses.

The features of **SIOP** within the Interaction component are designed to provide teachers with concrete ways of increasing student participation and developing English **language proficiency**. When implemented consistently, these practices will facilitate students' ability to meet the Common Core State Standards and other state standards, especially in the areas of listening and speaking.

SIOP® FEATURE 16:

Frequent Opportunities for Interaction and Discussion Between Teacher/Student and Among Students, Which Encourage Elaborated Responses About Lesson Concepts

Oral Language Development

Watch this video about academic language. You will see two teachers talking about the importance of opportunities for discussion and interaction. How does the teacher describe "intentional noise"?

This SIOP feature emphasizes the importance of balancing linguistic turn-taking between the teacher and students, and among students. It also highlights the practice of encouraging students to elaborate their responses rather than accepting yes/no and one-word answers, even from the youngest learners. As noted in the CCSS, "students must have ample opportunities to take part in a variety of rich, structured conversations" (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010a).

The findings of the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Students and Youth (August & Shanahan, 2006) revealed the important relationship between oral proficiency in English and reading and writing proficiency. Specifically, reading comprehension skills and writing skills are positively correlated with oral language proficiency in English (Geva, 2006); these two areas are particularly challenging for English learners and are reflected in the Common Core State Standards. Solid reading comprehension is the foundation for achievement in nearly every subject area in school, and writing proficiency in English is an essential skill as well. Some other important findings include:

1. There has long been recognition that language, cognition, and reading are intimately related (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988). As one acquires new language, new concepts are developed. Think about your own language learning with respect to understanding computer functions. Each new vocabulary word and term you learn and understand (e.g., *cloud, flash drive*, and *terabyte*) is attached to a concept that in turn expands your ability to think about how a computer works. As your own system of word-meaning grows in complexity, you are more capable of using the self-directed speech of verbal thinking ("Don't forget to save it on the flash drive to take to work."). Without an understanding of the words and the concepts they represent, you would not be capable of thinking about (self-directed speech) or discussing (talking with another) computer functions.
2. Language proficiency is a precursor to effective reading comprehension. Because an understanding of language makes acquiring knowledge possible, deriving meaning from texts in English will be challenging for English learners who may have difficulty reading unfamiliar words or comprehending their meaning.
3. Researchers who have investigated the relationship between language and learning suggest that interactive approaches—where there is more balance in student talk and teacher talk—are effective in promoting meaningful language learning opportunities for English learners (Cazden, 2001; Echevarría & Short, 2010; Fisher & Frey, 2013; McIntyre, et al, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010; Tharp & Gallimore, 1988; Toth, 2013; Walqui, 2006). Called *collaborative conversations* (grades K–2) or *collaborative discussions* (grades 3–6) in the Common Core State Standards, teaching approaches that emphasize oral language development and promote meaningful discussions around academic topics and texts have also been called ***instructional conversations*** **(ICs)** (Goldenberg, 1992–93) and *academic conversations* (Zwiers & Crawford, 2009). This mode of instruction has some of the following characteristics:

- Emphasizes active student involvement and meaningful language-based teaching.
  - Uses extended expression around text and topics so that students develop content knowledge and language proficiency simultaneously.
- Differs from typical teaching because most instructional patterns in classrooms involve the teacher asking a question, the student responding, and the teacher evaluating the response and asking another question (Cazden, 2001). In contrast, in the typical format of an IC:
  a. The teacher begins by briefly introducing the group to a theme or idea related to the text, and then relating the theme to students' background experiences.
  b. Next, the teacher shows the text to be read and asks prediction questions.
  c. As the text is read, the teacher "chunks" the text into sections to provide maximum opportunity for discussion, constantly relating the theme and background experiences to a text-based discussion.
  d. Students are asked to support their comments with evidence from the text. Figure 6.1 illustrates the contrast in approaches.

FIGURE 6.1 Contrast Typical Instructions with IC

Typical Instruction	Instructional Conversation
Teacher-centered Exact, specific answers evaluated by the teacher No extensive discussion Skill-directed Easier to evaluate Check for understanding Mostly literal level thinking and language use	Teacher facilitates Many different ideas encouraged Oral language practice opportunities using natural language Extensive discussion and student involvement Draw from prior background knowledge Student level of understanding transparent Fewer black and white responses Mostly higher-level thinking and language use

A conversational approach is particularly well suited to English learners who frequently find themselves significantly behind their peers in most academic areas, usually due to low reading levels and underdeveloped language skills. ICs provide a context for learning in which language is expressed naturally through meaningful discussion. Further, the skills developed through ICs meet the Common Core State Standards in the area of *Comprehension and Collaboration* in English Language Arts, *Speaking and Listening*. The following examples are taken from grades 11–12, but are similar across grade levels leading up to this level.

SL.11-12.1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 11–12 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

- Come to discussions prepared, having read and researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence from texts and other research on the topic or issue to stimulate a thoughtful, well-reasoned exchange of ideas.
- Work with peers to promote civil, democratic discussions and decision-making, set clear goals and deadlines, and establish individual roles as needed.
- Propel conversations by posing and responding to questions that probe reasoning and evidence; ensure a hearing for a full range of positions on a topic or issue; clarify, verify, or challenge ideas and conclusions; and promote divergent and creative perspectives.
- Respond thoughtfully to diverse perspectives; synthesize comments, claims, and evidence made on all sides of an issue; resolve contradictions when possible; and determine what additional information or research is required to deepen the investigation or complete the task.

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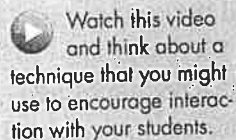
A rich discussion, or conversational approach, has advantages for teachers as well and contributes to a culturally responsive classroom. Through discussion teachers can more naturally activate the class's background knowledge as they encourage students to share their knowledge of the world and ideas about how language works. When teachers and students interact, it fosters a supportive environment and builds teacher–student rapport. Also, when working in small groups with each student participating in the discussion, teachers are better able to determine individual levels of understanding; weak areas are made transparent.

As mentioned previously, however, teachers typically do most of the talking in class. Of course, teachers have knowledge to share and discuss with students, but consistent teacher dominance reduces the opportunities students have to participate fully in lessons by discussing ideas and information, and practicing English as they express their ideas, opinions, and answers.

Effective SIOP teachers:

- Explicitly teach students rules for engaging in high-quality discussions to ensure that they take turns, stay on topic, actively listen, build on one another's comments, and are respectful (Short & Echevarría, 2016).
- Structure their lessons in ways that promote student discussion. They also strive to provide a more balanced linguistic exchange between themselves and their students. It can be particularly tempting for teachers to do most of the talking when students are not completely proficient in their use of English, but these students are precisely the ones who need opportunities to practice using English the most.
- Encourage extended expression from students when discussing the lesson's concepts. The teacher elicits more elaboration from students by using a variety of techniques that will take students beyond simple yes or no answers and short phrases (Fisher & Frey, 2013; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2007; Toth, 2013). Some of these techniques include asking students to expand on their answers by saying, "Tell me more about that"; and by asking direct questions to prompt more language use such as, "What do you mean by … ?" Another technique is to provide further information through questions such as "How do you know?" "What are the facts that support your ideas?" "Why is that important?"
- Use techniques such as offering restatements to scaffold replies: "In other words . . . is that accurate?" and frequently pausing to let students process the language and formulate their responses. If an English learner is obviously unsure about what to say, teachers call on other students to extend the response: "Vesna said . . . can you add to that?"



It takes time and practice for these techniques to become a natural part of a teacher's repertoire. The teachers with whom we've worked report that they had to consciously work at overcoming the temptation to speak for students or to complete a child's short phrase. The preceding transcript shows how the first teacher spoke for students instead of encouraging students to complete their thoughts. The following segment from the transcript provides another example.

TEACHER: What do "directions" … what is that for, Victor?

STUDENT: How to use …

communicate. Through meaningful interaction, students can practice speaking and making themselves understood. That implies asking and answering questions that probe for evidence, negotiating meaning, clarifying ideas, giving and justifying opinions, making well-reasoned statements, and more. Students may interact in pairs, triads, and small groups. Literature circles, think-pair-share, Jigsaw readings, debates, and science experiments are only a sample of the types of activities teachers can include in lessons to foster student–student interaction and discussion. An interactive approach has been shown to improve the achievement of English learners with learning disabilities (Echevarría, 1995) as well as typically developing English learners (Dockrell, Stewart, & King, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2007; Van de Pol, Volman, & Beishuizen, 2010).

SIOP® FEATURE 17:
Grouping Configurations Support Language and Content Objectives of the Lesson

In order to meet the Common Core standards especially for Speaking and Listening, teachers provide a variety of grouping configurations including whole class, partners, and small group. The intent of CCSS and other state standards is to engage students more directly in learning by having a balance of teacher presentation and productive group work by students. The benefits of a balanced approach include the following:

- Varying grouping configurations—by moving from whole class to small group, whole class to partners, and small group to individual assignments—provides students with opportunities to learn new information, discuss it, and process it. Organizing students into smaller groups for instructional purposes provides a context that whole-class, teacher-dominated instruction doesn't offer.
- Allowing students to work together to critique or analyze material, create graphic representations of vocabulary terms or concepts, or summarize material makes information more meaningful and increases learning.
- Changing grouping structures and activities enhances learning. It is recommended that when working with young learners, content, lectures, and cognitive activities should be limited to 5–10-minute periods each. With adolescents, content sessions should be limited to 10–15 minutes. These focused learning periods should be followed by interactive activities such as pair-shares or model building (Jensen, 2008).

In Chapter 5 of this book we present a process for teaching that slowly and purposefully shifts the workload from teacher to students and requires a variety of grouping configurations. As seen in Figure 5.1, "Scaffolding: Gradual Increase of Student Independence," the teacher uses a variety of groupings such as presenting information to the whole class and explicitly teaching part of the lesson, followed by a different grouping configuration in which students are given an opportunity to collaborate (students discuss ideas and information they learned during explicit teaching and guided instruction—not new information—and practice using

academic English). Then, when students have acquired sufficient background knowledge and language, they apply the information individually. Varying grouping structures provides more interaction, and students have more opportunities to participate actively in the lesson. In contrast, when students aren't learning, it is often because there has not been the critical scaffolding that Figure 5.1 represents. That is, teachers go directly from "I do it ... you watch" to "You do it alone."

In small, guided instruction groups, the teacher naturally differentiates instruction as she works on focused skill instruction, language development, and/or **assessment** of student progress. Small-group instruction provides more opportunity to discuss text (Saunders & Goldenberg, 2007, 2010) and increases reading achievement (Vaughn et al., 2003). While the teacher is working with one group, the other students can work on familiar material in small groups, with a partner, or individually, either at their desks or at workstations. Activities may include listening to recorded stories (at listening centers, on computers, or via electronic notebooks), reinforcing skills with computer games, creating graphic representations of vocabulary terms or concepts, summarizing material, practicing word sorts, or reading self-selected leveled readers. These activities are purposeful and meaningful, and they lead to increased learning. In our work, we have seen this type of grouping work successfully from kindergarten through high school. In their book, Gibson and Hasbrouck (2008) provide a wealth of ideas for grouping effectively, including how to organize the classroom and schedule activities, and how to use a rotation chart for flexible grouping.

But not just any kind of grouping works well. It is important to acknowledge the following information about grouping and think about it as you work with instructional groups.

- Grouping by ability, which divides students for instruction based on their perceived capabilities for learning (low group, average group, high group) has serious academic and social effects for students who are not in the top group (Callahan, 2005; Hiebert, 1983; Lucas, 1999). Futrell and Gomez (2008) make this point: "We cannot ignore the fact that for more than five decades, ability grouping has resulted in separation of students by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Many studies have confirmed that minority and low-income students of all ability levels are overrepresented in the lower tracks and underrepresented in the higher tracks" (p. 76).
- English learners, who learn from exposure to good language models, are often shut out of the groups with rich academic learning opportunities. In fact, in some schools, it has become common practice to group English learners with low-achieving students regardless of their academic ability and performance. This practice deprives English learners of the opportunity to learn grade-level academic skills and language.
- When working with low-achieving groups, teachers have been found to talk more, use more structure, ask lower-level questions, cover less material, spend more time on skills and drills, provide fewer opportunities for leadership and independent research, encourage more oral than silent reading, teach less vocabulary, and allow less wait time during questioning. In addition, they spent twice as much time on behavior and management issues (Oakes, 1985; Vogt, 1989).

- All students, including English learners, benefit from instruction that frequently includes a variety of grouping configurations. Whole-class groups are beneficial for introducing new information and concepts, modeling processes, and review. Flexible small groups promote the development of multiple perspectives and encourage collaboration. Partnering encourages success because it provides practice opportunities, scaffolding, and assistance from classmates (Flood, Lapp, Flood, & Nagel, 1992; Tompkins, 2006).

Effective SIOP classes are characterized by a variety of grouping structures, including individual work, partners, triads, small groups of four or five, cooperative learning groups, and whole class. Groups also vary because they may be homogeneous or heterogeneous by gender, language proficiency, language background, and/or ability. The decisions teachers make about how to group students should be purposeful, not arbitrary.

A case can be made for grouping students by how well they speak English during literacy instruction (Uribe & Nathenson-Mejía, 2008), but the teacher needs to be aware of each student's individual skill profile. For example, when working on fluency, English learners with strong decoding skills would not read the same text as an English learner who is still working on mastering phonics. Advantages of grouping English learners together are that teachers can target specific language instruction, and students are more apt to take risks in their second language. However, grouping students from very different grade levels (i.e., second through fifth grade) together based on language proficiency should be discouraged because these learners have very different social and academic needs (Uribe & Nathenson-Mejía, 2008).

There are other times that grouping by language proficiency level is useful. For example, if a teacher's goal is for students at beginning levels of English proficiency to practice using a particular language structure such as the present progressive (*-ing*) form within the context of a social studies lesson, then those students may be grouped together for that lesson. Likewise, when developing the skills of students with low levels of literacy, it makes sense to have those with similar ability grouped together for a particular lesson. Assigning all English learners to the same group regularly is *not* good practice, especially when total responsibility for teaching is turned over to a paraprofessional. In SIOP classes, English learners are given the same access to the curriculum and the teacher's expertise as native-English speaking students.

Using a variety of grouping configurations facilitates learning in a number of ways.

- It helps to maintain student interest because it is difficult for some students to stay focused when the teacher relies almost exclusively on whole-class instruction or having students work individually.
- Moving from whole class to small groups or partners adds variety to the learning situation and increases student involvement in the learning process.
- It provides much-needed movement for learners. When students are active, their brains are provided with the oxygen-rich blood needed for highest performance. Movement may be especially important for learners with special needs (Jensen, 2005).

It is recommended that at least two different grouping structures be used during a lesson, depending on the activity and objectives of the lesson.

In every case, peer discussions need to be structured so that students know their roles and responsibilities, and they need to be supervised appropriately. As more teachers move to implementing small group structures to address CCSS standards, we've noticed that in some classes, students are put into groups for collaborative work but little is accomplished. Groups are given a worksheet or other activity and are expected to complete it without much teacher input or oversight. Group work requires structure with the teacher circulating, checking for understanding, prompting, questioning, and clarifying. Also, tasks should be assigned a specific amount of time so that students stay engaged and the pace of the class moves along.

SIOP® FEATURE 18: Sufficient Wait Time for Student Responses Consistently Provided

Wait time is the length of time between utterances during an interaction. In classroom settings, it refers to the length of time a teacher pauses between asking a question and soliciting a response. A review of studies on wait time revealed that after a teacher asks a question, students must begin a response within an average time of one second. If they do not, the teacher repeats, rephrases, asks a different question, or calls on another student. Further, when a student makes a response, the teacher normally reacts or asks another question within an average time of 0.9 second (Rowe, 2003). Rather than filling the silence created by wait time, teachers should see the silence as an opportunity for students to process what is being asked of them. But, teachers may need to practice using wait time so that they become comfortable allowing students the time they need (Wasik & Hindman, 2013/2014).

Wait time varies by **culture**. It is appropriate in some cultures to let seconds, even minutes, lag between utterances, while in other cultures utterances can overlap one another. In U.S. classrooms, the average length of wait time is clearly *not* sufficient. Imagine the impact of wait time on English learners who are processing ideas in a new language and need additional time to put their thoughts into words. Research supports the idea of wait time and has found it to increase student discourse and enhance student-to-student interaction (Honea, 1982; Rowe, 2003; Swift & Gooding, 1983; Tobin, 1987).

Effective SIOP teachers are culturally responsive and consciously allow students to express their thoughts fully, without interruption. Many teachers in U.S. schools are uncomfortable with the silence that follows their questions or comments, and they immediately fill the void by talking themselves. This situation may be especially pertinent in SIOP classes where English learners need extra time to process questions in English, think of an answer in their second language, and then formulate their responses in English. Although teachers may be tempted to fill the silence, English learners benefit from a patient approach to classroom participation, in which teachers wait for students to complete their verbal contributions.

While effective SIOP teachers provide sufficient wait time for English learners, they also work to find a balance between wait time and moving a lesson along. Some youngsters may become impatient if the pace of the class lags. One strategy for accommodating impatient students is to have them write down their responses while waiting, and then they can check their answers against the final answer.

SIOP® FEATURE 19:

Ample Opportunity for Students to Clarify Key Concepts in L1 as Needed with Aide, Peer, or L1 Text

Best practice indicates that English learners benefit from opportunities to clarify concepts in their first language (L1). In fact, the National Literacy Panel on Language Minority Students and Youth found that academic skills such as reading taught in the first language transfer to the second language (August & Shanahan, 2006). Although SIOP instruction involves teaching subject-matter material in English, students are given the opportunity to have a concept or assignment explained in their L1 as needed. Significant controversy surrounds the use of L1 for instructional purposes, but we believe that clarification of key concepts in students' L1 by a bilingual instructional aide, peer, or through the use of materials written in the students' L1 provides an important support for the academic learning of those students who are not yet fully proficient in English.

This feature on the SIOP may have "N/A" circled as a score because not all SIOP classes need to use students' L1 to clarify concepts for them (especially for advanced English learners).

However, with Web sites and apps offering word translation capabilities and bilingual dictionaries available in book and computer program formats, all SIOP classrooms have access to resources in most of the students' **native languages**.

Teaching Ideas for Interaction

In the section that follows, you will find some teaching ideas to help you with preparing SIOP lessons.

- In math lessons, plan for targeted discussions in which students are taught a variety of discussion structures such as explaining their thinking, justifying the problem-solving strategy they used, and troubleshooting and revising their work (Kazemi & Hintz, 2014); these skills are reflected in the Common Core standards for Mathematical Practice.
- With appropriate supervision, students can interact with each other through a class electronic list, shared research files on a school network, or a planned pen pal e-mail or video camera exchange on the computer with another class elsewhere in the world.

- Expose high school students to real-world business experiences, the basics of entrepreneurship, and charitable donation by selling items on eBay as a class or club project. Students interact with one another as they collect items to sell, write descriptions of the items, download pictures, determine price, and work together to pack and ship the items. They also interact with customers through e-mail. The classroom setting provides supervision of the project, and the process is structured and documented through use of forms students complete along the way. Proceeds made are donated to charities selected by students. For English learners, this type of activity allows for full participation due to the context and hands-on nature of the project. Support may be provided by others in the group, as needed.
- In a discussion of the importance of movement for learning at all ages, Jensen (2005) suggests a number of games such as rewriting lyrics to familiar songs in pairs or teams as a content review, and then performing the song; playing Simon Says using content such as "Point to Rome. Point to the first country the Romans conquered," etc.; or role-plays, charades, or pantomime to review main ideas or key points.
- Students may interact by sharing their expertise. In an Expert Stay & Stray activity, students work in small groups on an assignment, such as completing a chart summarizing the steps to solving math problems or key points from a unit of study. Students in the group number off. The teacher calls a number, e.g., #4, and student #4 takes his or her group's chart and goes to another table and shares the information with the new group. Then the student remains with the new group as the teacher calls another number, e.g., #1. Student #1 takes the chart of the student who shared (#4)—which encourages students to listen carefully—and goes to a new group and shares the information from the chart. This activity provides students with an opportunity to discuss the information while completing the chart, then to share the information orally while others listen attentively, and to paraphrase someone else's explanation of the chart. It can be adapted to any content area or grade level.
- Start the class each day with students in pairs and have them tell each other the day's content objective in a Partner Share. Then they move to find another partner and tell them the language objective.
- An activity appropriate for all levels and most content areas is called Dinner Party (or Birthday Party for K–2). For instance, during reading instruction, students would respond to the prompt: "Suppose you could have a dinner party for authors or poets that we have studied. Whom would you invite? Why would you select them? What would be the seating order of the guests at your table, and why would you place them in that order? What do you think the guests would talk about during dinner? Include specific references to the authors' lives and works in your response." The purpose is for students to act out the questions by assuming personas, such as characters in novels, scientists, historical figures, or artists. During each Dinner Party, specific content from texts must be included and the characters must respond to each other as realistically and accurately as possible (Vogt & Echevarría, 2008).

- The time-tested activity of using Dialogue Journals provides students with an opportunity to interact through writing about topics of interest or those related to lessons. In elementary classes, journaling is typically between teacher and child as they share ideas. Students learn from teachers as they model appropriate written text, and teachers learn about their students' ideas and ways of expressing themselves. In secondary classes, students may be partnered with one another, if needed. The teacher participates in the dialogue every so often to monitor students' writing and to model correct writing.

Watch this video to see how students can work together to collect data, graph it, and present their findings. Notice how each student has a specific role to ensure participation and engagement.

- To support English learners, allow the techniques made popular by a television show: "50–50" and "phone a friend." Students who are unsure of an answer or are unable to articulate it well might ask to choose between two possible responses provided by the teacher (50–50) or ask a classmate for help (phone a friend). However, to ensure practice with the language, the original child must give "the final answer" to the teacher.

Differentiating Ideas for Multi-level Classes

We know that most classes with English learners are made up of students with multiple proficiency levels. Even those students designated as Emerging, for example, may have stronger listening skills than writing skills or stronger reading skills than speaking skills. Teachers have at their disposal a variety of ways to differentiate spoken English to make it comprehensible for our diverse English learners. The Interaction component lends itself well to meeting the variety of instructional needs and proficiency levels of students in your classrooms. Several considerations include the following:

- Use sentence frames for both oral and written answers. "It has often been said that teachers, rather than students, use academic language in the classroom. However, our students won't learn academic vocabulary solely by listening to us; they need to practice using it themselves" (Donnelly & Roe, 2010, p. 135). Sentence frames have been mentioned several times in this book as effective ways to scaffold English learners while they are acquiring their new language. Donnelly and Roe (2010, p. 132) suggest that teachers write sentence frames according to their students' English proficiency by:

    1. Writing sentences that express a language function (e.g., compare/contrast), and replacing target language with blanks.
    2. Replacing target words with blanks.
    3. Creating a word bank or a list of words that were eliminated from the original sentences.

What is left are sentence frames with fill-in spaces that are **differentiated** for different language levels. Lower level frames are not as complex as those for more English-proficient students. For example: The expected outcome for students at levels 2, 3, and 4 working with comparison/contrast might be:

Level 2. Sentence frame with vocabulary underlined: *Carrots are orange. Peas are green.* (simple sentence)

Sentence frame with vocabulary removed: _______ are _______.

Level 3. Sentence frame with vocabulary underlined: *Carrots* and *peas* are both *vegetables*, but *carrots* are *root vegetables* and *peas grow on vines*. (comparative sentence)

Sentence frame with vocabulary removed: _______ and _______ are both _______, but _______ are _______ and _______.

Level 4. Sentence frame with vocabulary underlined: *The main difference between carrots and peas is that carrots are root vegetables while peas grow on vines.* (complex comparative sentence)

Sentence frame with vocabulary removed: The main difference between _______ and _______, is that _______ are _______, while _______.

Sentence frames can use familiar content such as illustrated above, or they can use specific topics that are being studied. Other language functions, such as cause/effect, problem/solution, and so forth can serve as the basis of the differentiated sentence frames.

As you can see, less proficient students will use sentence frames to participate in discussions, Dialogue Journals, and written work. More proficient speakers have a model of correct syntax to assist their contributions.

- Allow older students to choose between two or more assignments to complete. When students have options, they are more engaged, feel more confident, and perform better (Sparks, 2010). Some students may opt for an oral presentation to demonstrate their knowledge rather than a written assignment. Lower proficiency students may be more comfortable with a different mode of assignment than more proficient students, and having some control over their learning may increase their achievement.
- Pair students with more proficient speakers to scaffold their participation. More proficient speakers have an opportunity to practice using academic English and negotiating meaning with peers while less proficient students have the support needed to complete academic tasks.
- Differentiate wait time by becoming accustomed to allowing more wait time for beginning English speakers and those students who require more time for processing information. More advanced speakers will require less wait time. However, don't forget that all students benefit from time to think about questions or new information.
- Partner students together who speak the same **primary language** for native language support as needed.