

# SKYROCKET LANGUAGE ACQUISITION IN THE CLASSROOM

## 9 SCIENCE-BASED STRATEGIES



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For Voyager Sopris Learning®

January 2019



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With 5 million English language learners (ELLs) enrolled in U.S. schools, nearly one of every 10 students is an ELL. We know ELLs “are the fastest-growing group of students in our nation’s schools; however, with a language barrier to participation and access in the education system, they are also disproportionately underserved and underachieving.”<sup>i</sup>

With an increase in ELLs and the complexities that accompany this group, urgency and pressure are mounting for school districts and educators to provide curricula, instruction, and strategies to transform these students to proficient readers, writers, speakers, and listeners of the English language.

A better way must be found to support ELLs in our schools, without demanding more of educators who already are investing in enhanced focus, expanded creativity, and continued guidance for ELLs’ futures.” By better understanding the characteristics and needs of this student population, schools can do a better job of supporting their learning.”<sup>ii</sup> We began our research in the growing field of educational neuroscience for answers. We know an understanding of neuroscience can change education; understanding how the brain works enables educators to reduce students’ behavioral issues. Can neuroscience unlock and explain the complexities of how an ELL acquires a new language?

Our goal with this guide is to analyze the problems that ELLs face and demonstrate that educators are more likely to succeed in teaching students how to read if they have “a deeper understanding of the cognitive, emotional, and cultural challenges their students are facing while trying to learn English and course content simultaneously.”<sup>iii</sup> By providing an understanding of ELLs’ unique needs as they acquire a new language, teachers can utilize the suggested brain-aligned strategies to foster the development of successful English-language-learning readers taking them beyond World-class Instructional Design and Assessment’s (WIDA) Language Proficiency Standards<sup>iv</sup> Level 3 (developing) and to the pathway of being a lifelong reader at level 6 (reaching) which is equivalent to a Native English speaker on grade level.

## INVESTIGATING THE HURDLES

Most researchers agree that “acquiring language within the language-specific areas of the brain diminishes during the middle years of adolescence”<sup>v</sup> making language learning more difficult as one gets older. The reason for this challenge is learning a second language recruits brain regions that usually are not involved with language acquisition (Midgley, Holcomb, & Grainger, 2009) and adolescence is seen as a time of transformation and “remodeling or letting go of the connections in the brain that are not needed.”<sup>vi</sup> Knowing this, it is understandable why students will have certain hurdles they must overcome while learning to read a second language.

Laurie Olsen, Ph.D., who has worked with hundreds of school districts across the nation, states that these challenges stack up throughout the years and notes these obstacles, if not overcome, can cause students to disengage and try to become invisible in school. She notes that usually around fifth grade, this disengagement can be noticed, and the results of their challenges, become overwhelming for these students. She further notes that ELLs “have a difficulty earning sufficient graduation credits and fulfilling college preparatory classes,”<sup>vii</sup> due to the limited access to a high number of support classes that limit curriculum and instruction.

### High Drop-out Rates, Graduation Rates, and College Completion

It is not difficult to see how a student could become discouraged and drop out after years of feeling disconnected to their program of study. It is even easier to see why these students would fail to pursue higher education programs.

Dr. Olsen (2014) found the following problems contributed to challenges associated with ELLs and language acquisition. We have created nine brain-aligned solutions to overcome each problem and help skyrocket reading acquisition beyond level three and help create lifelong readers. We can take an evolutionary standpoint and consider

that our brains were built to easily acquire the spoken language after hundreds of years of humans learning how to speak with each other, however, learning to read and write are relatively new and “place a heavier demand on neural networks than speaking.”<sup>viii</sup> We can say “speaking is a normal, genetically hardwired capability; reading is not”<sup>ix</sup> and writing is the most difficult of the four skills. For unlocking the secret to accelerating literacy for ELLs, this is where it all begins and there are clues to look for.

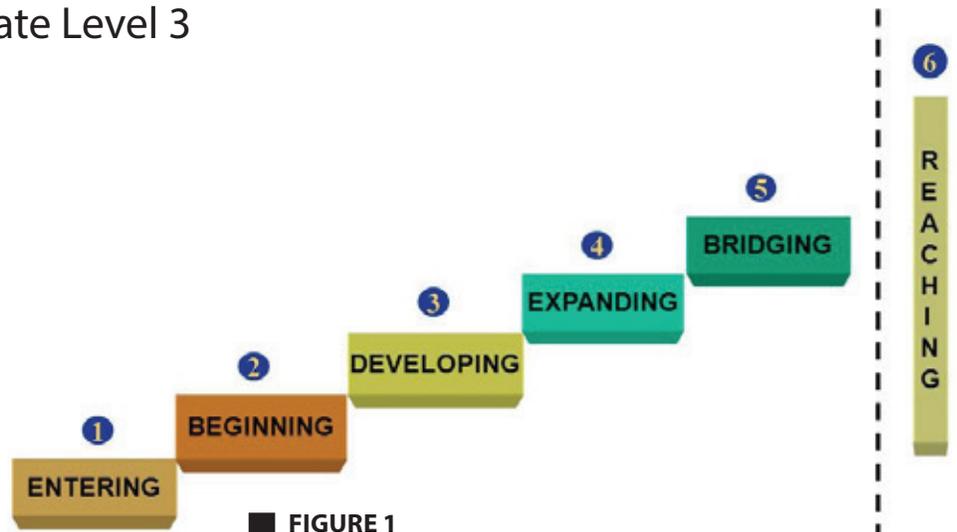
*“How quickly and successfully the brain learns to read is greatly influenced by the student’s ability to speak. It is important to understand what cognitive neuroscience has revealed about how the brain processes the spoken word.”<sup>x</sup>*

Has the student developed a vast vocabulary? Are there grammatical errors with their speech? How do students put their sentences together?

To investigate how we can advance language acquisition in the classroom, we should start at the beginning and think of language acquisition as compared to learning how to rollerblade. Before we can glide along the street like experts, we must master some of the fundamentals. We must know how to stand without falling, start and stop, and we must even know how to glide. However, just knowing how to rollerblade is not enough. A rock can get stuck in our wheels and everything comes to a halt. Like the student who has not yet mastered the foundations of reading, they fall down and have no idea what happened. When we understand how our rollerblades work, and how each wheel turns before we can proceed, it is much easier to put that knowledge into practice and learn to blade (or read) like a pro. We can easily fall flat on our face and wonder “What happened?” and become stuck or choose to gain some additional knowledge about how the wheels work (or the foundations of reading) to help us overcome the challenges we will inevitably face learning this new skill.

## PROBLEM: Students Lack Vocabulary and Become Stuck at Intermediate Level 3

The majority of ELLs are stuck at intermediate levels of English oral proficiency or below. A key component to becoming proficient at reading and writing begins with understanding vocabulary. Knowing the meaning of each word will help students to read that word. “It makes a difference when educators are able to take the time to teach vocabulary and build meaning around those words—including giving students time to apply, discuss, and write about them. Students need explicit instruction in developing highly portable vocabulary they will encounter in multiple academic settings.”<sup>xi</sup>



**FIGURE 1**  
WIDA'S Language Proficiency Standards Show the Need for Support at Level 3 and Beyond.

*Courtesy the WIDA Consortium*

## STRATEGY 1: Build Vocabulary with Meaningful Relationships Between Words and Students' Mental Lexicon

Learning to read requires “a solid mental lexicon of spoken vocabulary”<sup>xii</sup> and although many researchers “differ on the nature of these networks, most agree that the mental lexicon is organized according to meaningful relationships between words.”<sup>xiii</sup>

“It seems that the brain stores clusters of closely associated words in a tightly packed network so that words within the network can activate each other in minimal time. Activating words between networks, however, takes longer.”<sup>xiv</sup> It would take the brain a shorter time to connect words in the same categories (vegetables, peas, peppers, artichoke) and consequently longer to access words not connected in the same network as (frog and salad), for example.

### Reading Difficulties in Older Students Prove the Need for Explicit Instruction in Literacy-Related Foundational Skills

The majority of adolescent poor readers, then, continue to need instruction in accurate and automatic word recognition (Vaughn & Fletcher, 2012; Lovett, Barron, & Frijters, 2013), at either basic or more advanced levels. Word recognition, however, is not the whole story. Most adolescent struggling readers also are challenged by other essential components of reading: vocabulary, fluency, and many aspects of comprehension (Compton et al., 2014), and often are unable to access content through reading alone. Between grades 2.5 and 5, poor readers (who may or may not be eligible for special services) who know basic phonics often stumble on vowel correspondences and multisyllabic words—unable to break longer words into syllable chunks, prefixes, roots, and suffixes, or to recognize the vowel sounds represented by vowel teams (ea, oi, ue, etc.) (Archer, Gleason, & Vachon, 2003). When these skills are weak, they limit vocabulary growth which is essential for comprehending

content-laden text in subjects such as science, history, literature, or even math. The words students must recognize independently occur infrequently (Nagy & Anderson, 1984) but are the most important for comprehension across all content areas (Lee & Spratley, 2010; National Institute for Literacy, 2007).<sup>xv</sup>

**Put it into Action:** When learning new vocabulary words, be sure to connect words in categories and practice new words in clusters, using maps or webs. During prewriting, take one word in the middle of a paper and map out as many words and ideas that are connected to this one to form a sentence.

**Action Tip:** Create meaningful relationships between words and a students' mental lexicon because vocabulary words in the same network are easier to access.

## PROBLEM: Students Have Difficulty with Syntax, Phonemes, and Sentences

As mentioned, students must learn the foundations of reading to be successful readers.

Syntax is defined as “the way in which linguistic elements (such as words) are put together to form constituents such as phrases or clauses.”<sup>xvi</sup> Languages like Spanish and French put the adjective after the noun they are describing. Cold water becomes eau froide in French and agua fria in Spanish. Anyone who has ever used Google Translate to gather the meaning of another language has noticed there often is not an accurate translation from one language to another.

*Since not all languages are the same with these laws of syntax, ELLs “need to understand how English rules of syntax differ from their native tongue.”<sup>xvii</sup>*

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech and to read, students must be able to match the sounds (phonemes) to the letters of the alphabet (graphemes) that represent the sounds.

Sentences can have different meanings depending on the rules of syntax or word order. The boy chased the dog and the dog chased the boy have different syntax, word order, and meaning. Learning words is one skill and adding meaning to these words is an entirely different skill. See how our strategies can help students overcome these challenges.

## STRATEGY 2: Making Sense of Sounds/Phonemes

**Phonemes:** To read, students must be able to match the sounds (phonemes) to the letters of the alphabet (graphemes) that represent the sounds. The human brain is not born with the insight to make sound-letter connections, so this must be taught.

A phoneme is the smallest unit of sound in speech and the English language is comprised of 44 phonemes. These phonemes form morphemes which are the “smallest units of language that have meaning.”<sup>xviii</sup>

*As phonemes turn into morphemes, and morphemes into words, and words into phrases, the student must organize these components into sentences that add meaning to what they want to say. (Souza, 2011).*

When a student falls behind in reading before third grade, or an older student

reads at less than a third-grade level, the most likely source of difficulty is slow and inaccurate word recognition (Boardman et al., 2008; Curtis, 2004; Scammacca et al., 2007). Word recognition problems, in turn, may be rooted in both phonological and orthographic processing difficulties (Dehaene, 2009; Fletcher, Lyon, Fuchs, & Barnes, 2007; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001). Phonological difficulties involve poorly specified memories for the sounds in words and difficulties with phoneme segmentation. Orthographic processing problems involve poorly specified visual-orthographic memories for the letters and letter sequences in printed words. Word recognition in an alphabetic writing system depends, first, on phonological processing—the ability to identify, segment, and blend the individual speech sounds in words (Ehri, 2014; National Reading Panel, 2000; Brady, 2011). While phonological skills are crucial to the connection between spoken and written language, orthographic processing often is a concomitant weakness in poor readers. Students may learn to segment sounds, but often have only minimal grasp of how the sounds are

represented in print, either for reading or spelling (Moats, 2010), unless they are directly taught how the print system works. Furthermore, and especially in older poor readers, word recognition and spelling depend on fast recognition and recall of syllable spelling patterns, meaningful word parts (morphemes), recurring letter patterns unique to English, and some oddly spelled, common words. Students who are to achieve fast and accurate word reading at middle or high school levels must know more than basic phonics.<sup>xix</sup>

**Put it into Action:** Have students practice the foundations of reading the correct pronunciation of phonemes and words. Students can privately record their own pronunciation and receive feedback as many times as they need to improve.

**Action Tip:** The human brain is not born with the insight to make sound-letter connections. This must be taught.

## STRATEGY 3: Understanding How Words Turn into Sentences

We have closely examined how the brain recognizes and stores words, but to communicate effectively, these words must be organized in a way that they communicate meaning

*Did you know “the young adult brain can determine the meaning of a sentence in about one-fifth of a second?”*

The brain needs just one-fourth of a second to name an object and the same amount of time to pronounce that object.”xx When reading a sentence, the student grasps the meaning from each word based on the words they already have stored in their

mental lexicon. How well a student will comprehend this written text is determined by how well that student comprehends the same text when it is spoken.

Memory also is involved when reading sentences as the longer the sentence, the harder the brain must work to remember what is being read. Neuroscientists explain that memory works in two stages as information comes in through our senses (immediate memory: that lasts a few seconds, like when we need to remember a phone number and working memory that can last for minutes to a few days). Long-term storage can store information for years. (Squire and Kandel 1999). For students to read and be able to recall what

they have read, and answer comprehension questions, the words they are reading must be interesting, meaningful, and memorable to access their working memory that will fade after time.

**Put it into Action:** Practice writing simple sentences using mapping, graphs, or charts. Use idea starters like photographs, words, or topics to help students begin.

**Action Tip:** Remember “the young adult brain can determine the meaning of a sentence in about one-fifth of a second.”xxi and we know it’s much easier if the student already has the vocabulary words stored in their mental lexicon.

## PROBLEM: Students Lack the Skills Needed for Academic Success

Students must learn the important skill of being able to separate academic language from everyday language. Conversational language skills, (“Hey, how are you?”) also called Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) (Cummins, 1979) are easier to learn, but academic language acquisition (words used in subject areas like photosynthesis or quadratic equations) take longer. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) was coined by Jim Cummins to describe “the ability for these students to understand the difficult language used in academia.” (Cummins, 1979). His research found that students were

able to develop conversational language in two years, but it would take five to seven years to become fluent in academic language. This means all instruction with ELLs should be designed for “explicit language development that integrates subject-matter content, English literacy and language, and academic vocabulary.” Studies show that developing academic vocabulary can play an integral role in helping ELLs achieve full proficiency and succeed across content areas. In mixed-ability classes, teachers are encouraged to develop explicit content and language goals for all students.

Imagine the student who arrives to the U.S. with a strong background in mathematics, only to discover they cannot read the English required for word problems and they become stuck and discouraged. We know the U.S. is ranked 41/72 countries in mathematics and many language learners are coming from these top-ranked countries, adding to their frustration in their new country. A strong focus on teaching academic language will improve students’ confidence levels and provide them with the foundations of success.

## STRATEGY 4: Teaching Idioms and Multiple Meanings

Idioms can be confusing for an ELL as the literal translation does not make sense. For example, a teacher exclaims “you hit the nail on the head” when a student gets the answer right, leaving a student new to the English language confused. Or, imagine the PE teacher shouting to students who might be interested in trying out for the cross-country team to “meet me at the track at 7:00 a.m. sharp.” This statement might confuse a language learner who wants

to join the team but is still mastering the language and unsure what “sharp” means in this example. Add context and extra clarity to your statement to help ELLs understand that the word “sharp” does not mean “needle-like” but to be precise and on time.

**Put it into Action:** Some strategies to help students uncover the meaning behind idioms and multiple meanings are to “keep an idiom journal” and discuss multiple

meanings of phrases in class. Students could research idioms online and present their findings to the class. Have students clarify the meaning behind the new phrases for a powerful listening activity.

**Action Tip:** When speaking, be sure to simplify your vocabulary and sentence structure, avoiding idioms that might confuse students new to the English language.

## STRATEGY 5: Using Technology to Improve Listening Skills

Studies have shown that Internet-based technology tools “can significantly improve listening comprehension in English.” (Verdugo and Belmonte, 2007). We also know “although students may learn how to segment sounds, they often do not know how those sounds are translated into print for reading or spelling, which leaves them at a disadvantage.” According to Guskey (1997), “The best feedback to students is immediate, specific, and direct, and it offers explicit directions for improvement.”

### Improving Foundational Skills Using Technology

Putting phonological awareness and word recognition online has allowed students in a self-paced environment to master essential foundational skills before starting more advanced word-study instruction (Reed & Vaughn, 2010). Since spelling, word recognition, and recognition of meaningful parts of words (morphemes) depend on the

same underlying knowledge of language forms and systems, students must learn to analyze words structurally. Focusing on identifying the constituent parts of words not only improves spelling (Tsesmeli & Seymour, 2009), but also word-attack skills and the ability to read fluently for comprehension (Bhattacharya & Ehri, 2004; Ehri, 2014).

**Put it into Action:** Well-planned lessons using technology can improve student’s conversational and academic language while adding to student engagement and motivation. Technology should be used “as a tool to enhance teaching, learning, and multisensory experiences” giving students the extra confidence to reach outside of their comfort zones as they are learning, being intrinsically motivated, and becoming an active participant of their learning process. We also know adolescents prefer computer-



mediated feedback versus teacher feedback because teacher feedback, especially in the classroom, has the potential to damage the motivation of students with low self-esteem or high self-consciousness (Kluger & Adler, 1993).

**Action Tip:** Remember, students do not need to be entertained, they need to be engaged which produces long-term results.

## STRATEGY 6: Building Confidence Through Self-Awareness

“Learning to speak English becomes the ELLs first priority because it provides the foundation for hearing and reflecting on the structure of the spoken words.” How quickly an ELL will learn to read “depends a great deal on how well that student has acquired, and practices spoken English.”

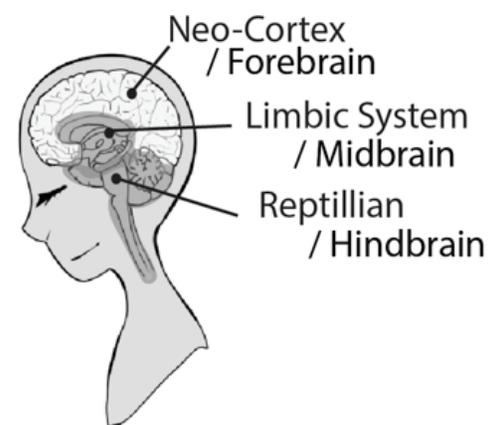
They must use their courage to overcome the fear of making a mistake, not being perfect, feeling embarrassed or ridiculed in front of their classmates to gain this skill. Understanding this process becomes easier if we can think of the three parts of the brain throughout this process. The Reptilian Brain/Hindbrain is where our reaction of fight, flight, and freeze originates and naturally wants to keep us safe. Language learners must feel safe enough to venture out of their comfort zone. Next, their Limbic Area/Midbrain comes into play, as students’ feelings and emotions motivate them to continue to learn how to read as they envision living a successful and happy life. Finally, their Neo-Cortex/Forebrain is

involved, creating language development with the ability to think, reflect, reason, plan, and connect themselves to the outside world.

**Put it into Action:** Since all three parts of the brain must work together as the language learner moves outside of their comfort zone and overcomes their fears, have students write down where they become stuck. What are their fears? Research shows that when one can identify and acknowledge their fears, and they “name it to tame it,” the fear loses its power. When students identify what might be holding them back, soothing neurotransmitters are secreted in the brain and they will be in a better place to continue to learn.

**Action Tip:** Fostering a caring classroom culture will allow students to feel comfortable and safe enough to venture outside their comfort zones, bypassing their fears and gaining confidence as they are acquiring new skills.

### The Three Brains



**FIGURE 2**  
Shows How the Three Parts of The Brain Must Work Together

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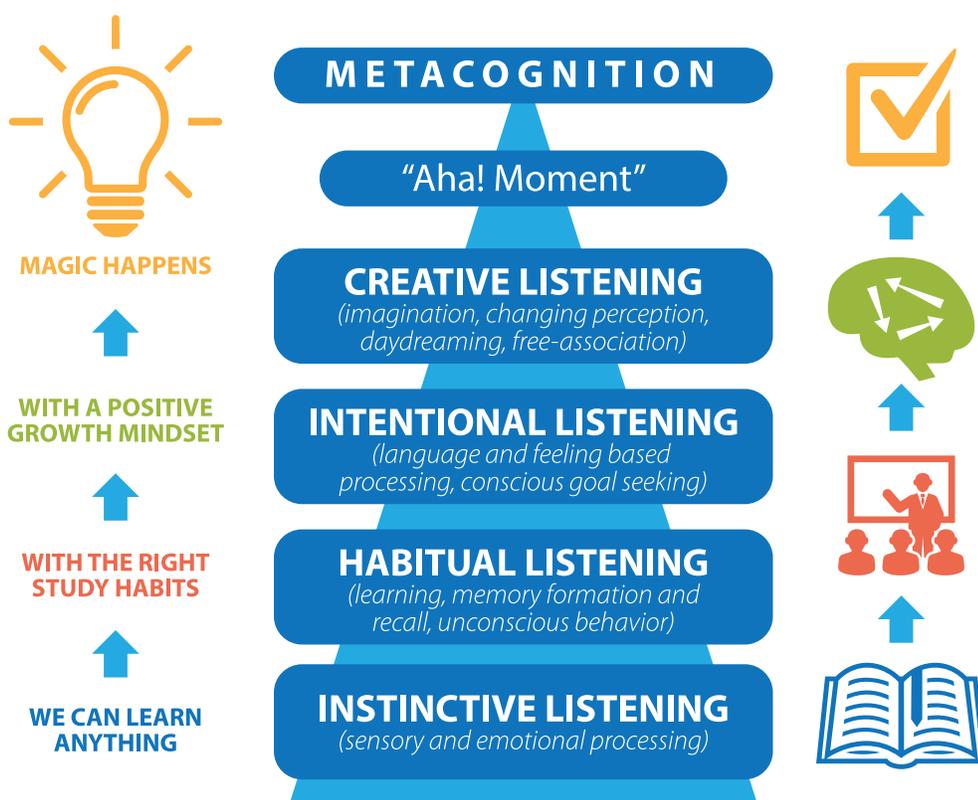
## STRATEGY 7: Listening and Metacognition to Improve Motivation to Read

Although metacognition is not a new concept, its application to developing second-language listening skills is recent (Sousa 2011).

ELLs can become better listeners when they also consider how well their skills as a listener are progressing. Metacognition in ELL instruction should also focus on developing students' metacognitive skills. Improving the ELLs' listening skills will help them to increase their motivation and confidence.

### How Do We Reach the "Aha! Moment" and Metacognition?

When a student starts learning something new, they go through different stages on the way to metacognition, where they are aware and in control of their knowledge. It begins with Instinctive Learning, where students study and learn with curiosity and desire. They experience positive emotions when they attain success. Next, they move to Habitual Learning, where students form study habits. It is very important students develop proper study habits or else they will only get by until the work becomes challenging. They will find themselves doing poorly on tests in spite of studying as hard as they can. Intentional Learning is where they will spend most of their logic, reason, and attention when solving mental problems. The challenge here is they are working with their short-term working memory, which contains limited information. It is easy to get distracted at this level of awareness. Worries, fears, and doubts also operate at this level and can interfere with decision-making strategies. Students must learn strategies to move forward in spite of fear and focus on the positive side of situations, taking a proactive approach to learning, instead of giving up at the first signs of a challenge. Finally, students arrive at Creative Learning, where all of the magic happens for decision making and goal setting. This process is strenuous on



**FIGURE 3**  
Shows the Steps Towards Metacognition and Listening

the brain and requires frequent brain breaks to reset our neurochemistry. Students must have strategies for practice, study, and learning and be able to find a way to relax their brain and body.

During these resting states, remarkable activity takes place, allowing the brain to creatively solve problems. When creativity is integrated with logic and reason, research shows we can solve conflicts and improve academic success. Metacognition occurs when students are aware and in control of the knowledge they are learning. When students reach this level, they begin to have "Aha!" experiences, where they gain insight from the knowledge they are learning. This is the true magic of the learning process.

**Put it into Action:** Remember, listening in English is more difficult than speaking, reading, or writing. Have ELLs evaluate their own performance regarding their metacognitive activities when listening. Create a listening checklist and have students rate themselves. Is there a point they lose focus or attention? What happens? How can they get themselves back on course?

**Action Tip:** Ask students to think about their own mental processes when dealing with a learning task. They will begin to understand how they learn best and become proactive to make improvements on their own.

## **PROBLEM:** Students Are Challenged with Long Passages (Reading and Writing)

“One of the most reliable predictors of how well youngsters will learn to read is the size of their mental lexicons” (Sousa, 2005) where words are organized in meaningful relationship to each other. Remember the brain stores clusters of closely associated words in a tightly packed network so words within the network can activate each other in minimal time. The more words in our students’ mental lexicon, the easier it will

be for students to learn how to recognize the words they are reading and add meaning to them for comprehension.

Researchers show that the rate of early vocabulary growth was a strong predictor of scores at ages 9–10 on tests of vocabulary, listening, speaking, syntax, and semantics. (Hart and Risley, 2003). To acquire language, we must understand “what is said, not how it is said. The best

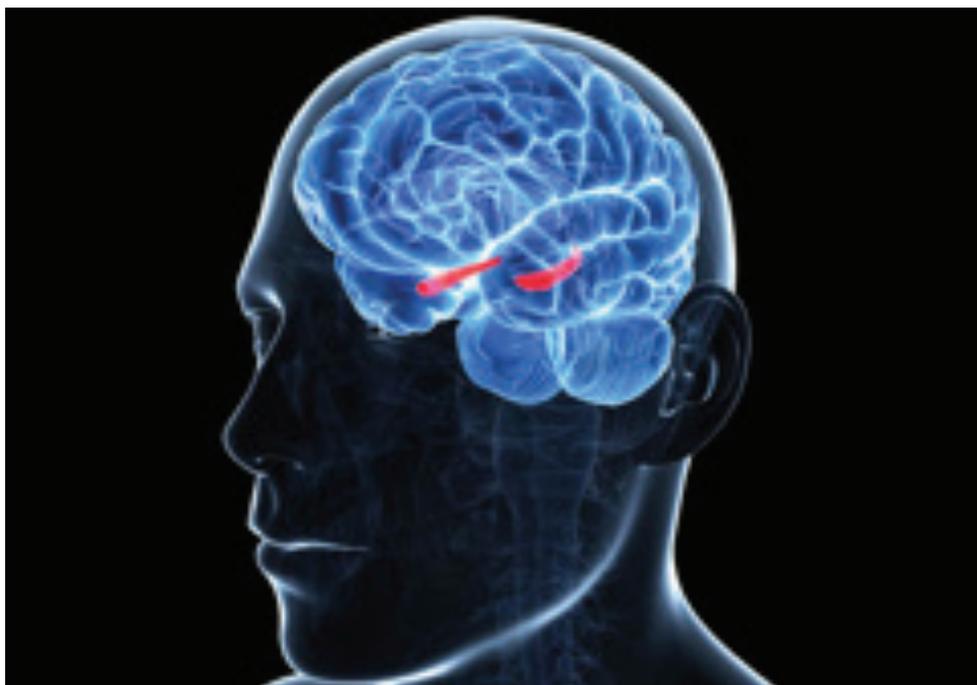
language lessons are therefore interesting conversations, good books, films, and activities that are fun and engaging.” The idea is to motivate students to read and comprehend these long passages with prereading activities designed to stimulate prior knowledge so students do not shy away from the text but become engaged with the content enough to overcome their challenges with acquisition.

## **STRATEGY 8:** Building Confidence with Mental Practice, Intonation, and Stress Patterns

“Since we listen more than we speak, read, or write” listening is an important skill to teach ELLs. Listening allows students to practice the words they are learning mentally, hear different intonation and stress patterns, and build the confidence needed to speak themselves. Current research suggests that “we must repeat to remember” and that “information is remembered best when it is elaborate, meaningful, and contextual” (Medina, 2008). “We remember things much better the more elaborately we encode what we encounter, especially if we can personalize it.” (Medina, 2008).

How does memory impact our ability to read? We must think about how incoming information is gathered. We talked about immediate memory (a few seconds) versus working memory (minutes to days) and long-term storage (years) so we must remember the working memory can only handle a few items at a time. Most adolescents and adults can remember about five to seven items at a time. If we are trying to remember a poem, it helps to use chunking and memorize one paragraph or group at a time. Because our working memory is limited, beginner readers will have difficulty reading long sentences.

### **What part of our brain is involved with memory?**



The hippocampus, a part of the limbic system (in the temporal lobe) is the part of the brain associated with memory, emotions, and motivation. The name comes from the Greek word hippos (meaning horse) and kampo (meaning monster). Its shape resembles a seahorse.

**Put it into Action:** If we want to remember something ourselves, or teach our students to remember something, we must be sure we understand the meaning of what we want to remember, practice

the word mentally first, (imagine an image of the word) and then practice speaking the word with meaning attached. It is here that students can practice different stress patterns and intonations for different words and phrases.

**Action Tip:** We must repeat to remember. We can find tricks to remember what we are learning (acronyms or acrostics) or by associating images to the vocabulary words we are trying to remember.

## STRATEGY 9: Blueprints for Writing

This is the most challenging of skills for ELLs to learn. They will learn to speak first, then read and then write. To help students expand their writing, explicit instruction can be helpful. Remember monolingual students first learn to speak, then read, and then write, but ELLs must learn all of these skills at the same time. (Sousa, 2011). The most current research in this area is limited but researchers agree “that reading and listening to read-alouds have positive effects on developing young ELLs’ vocabulary and other facets of their language development, including writing.”

Students can benefit from scaffolded writing supports, graphic organizers, and discussion of a topic before they begin the writing process. ELLs “can improve substantially over the course of a school year, especially if the teachers provide students with feedback on both content and form.”

**Put it into Action:** Some proven strategies to help ELLs to write is for teachers to “display the features in writing samples.” Teachers can model a sample with a clear beginning, middle, and end so

students have a blueprint to follow. Practice “quick drawing and quick writing” to brainstorm ideas for a writing passage.

**Action Tip:** Have students write about something that interests them for motivation. Even though writing is the most challenging domain, assignments that connect with students’ interests can jumpstart and maintain their interest in writing.

## EXISTING SOLUTIONS: WHAT’S WORKING

We have provided some specific strategies for helping ELLs, but there are many different actions you can take. While there is not one best way to teach a nonspeaker all they will need to know about the English language, there are some models that prove to be more effective than others.

“A major study of instructional programs for ELLs was carried out by the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) and completed in 2006.” These research findings favored instruction that combines interactive and direct instruction.

### 1. Interactive Teaching

Students can lose interest in a typical lecture-style classroom, so an interactive approach is recommended where “the teacher is actively promoting the students’ progress by encouraging higher levels of thinking, speaking, and reading.” Some examples of interactive teaching include group discussions, brainstorming, cooperative dialogues, or questions about a text they are reading

or a piece of writing they are analyzing. All of these strategies help guide the student to the next level of thinking with the help of their active participation.

### 2. Direct Instruction

Places an emphasis on instruction led by the teacher with “explicit and direct teaching of skills or information, for example letter sound associations, spelling patterns, or vocabulary words.” Some examples of direct instruction include modelling, comprehension checks, using scaffolds and guidance, providing feedback, and differentiated instruction where the instructor guides the student toward mastery. Studies show that directly teaching the early stages of reading (phonemes) and the forming of letters to words (morphemes) “is an effective component of ELL programs.”

### 3. Developing Listening Skills

Since we listen more than we “speak, read, or write,” teaching students’ skills in listening is a crucial component of an ELL program that will enhance all other areas

of language acquisition. Some examples to help students develop listening skills are to provide comprehension checks or questions for students to answer after they have listened to a passage to be sure they are actively listening and doing the work needed to acquire this skill.

### 4. Overcoming the Reluctance to Speak

It is easy to understand why students who are learning a new language are reluctant to speak. Students in middle and high school may withdraw more when the pressure to fit in “makes them reluctant to ask questions or participate in class for fear of exposing weakness in English fluency” so it is important for teachers to emphasize the importance of learning from their mistakes and the concept of failing forward as they are learning. Since everyone has had an experience of making a mistake that has caused embarrassment, using these lessons to build trust and rapport will help students take more risks and overcome their fears.



For more information, visit:  
[voyagersopris.com/languagealive](http://voyagersopris.com/languagealive)

## Introduction to *LANGUAGE! Live*

Identifying the needs of linguistically diverse students and creating a plan to ensure they meet grade-level ELA expectations is the first step in fostering that advancement and success.

***LANGUAGE!® Live provides instruction in ELA and English language development (ELD) simultaneously to accelerate ELLs' achievement in middle and high school.***

*LANGUAGE! Live's* online instruction and teacher-directed lessons provide the needed balance for ELLs to acquire the language and become proficient decoders, readers, and writers.

*LANGUAGE! Live* is the solution for English language learners that provides foundational skills, vocabulary, language, and comprehension instruction.

## LITERACY INTERVENTION BUYER'S GUIDE

Does your adolescent literacy intervention align to the 9 strategies for ELLs?

INTERVENTION CRITERIA CHECKLIST	LANGUAGE! Live	Other
Build Vocabulary with Meaningful Relationships Between Words and Mental Lexicon	✓	
Make Sense of Sounds and Phonemes	✓	
Understand How Words Turn into Sentences	✓	
Teach Idioms and Multiple Meanings	✓	
Use Technology to Improve Listening Skills	✓	
Build Confidence Through Self-Awareness	✓	
Improve Motivation to Read Through Listening and Metacognition	✓	
Build Confidence with Mental Practice, Intonation, and Stress Patterns	✓	
Provide a Blueprint for Writing	✓	



Download *LANGUAGE! Live* ELL Overview:  
[go.voyagersopris.com/language-live/ell](http://go.voyagersopris.com/language-live/ell)

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