

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

GK	<p>Hello, Christina and hello, listeners! Welcome to the sixth session in Module 4 of the TALE Academy, Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs.</p> <p>Okay, Christina, are you ready for a scenario?</p> <p>Imagine being dropped into a social studies course that is being taught in a language you don't speak. Maybe you recognize some words and can even follow the class discussion, but when the teacher turns to you and asks you to join the discussion, what might happen? Do you speak in your home language or the new language or maybe a bit of both? Perhaps you don't speak at all out of fear of being wrong. You are comfortable speaking with your new friends outside of class, so why don't you feel ready to dive into classroom discussions?</p>
CLH	<p>Fear of humiliation, maybe?</p> <p>That scenario captures two core myths about language immersion and acquisition that have shaped instructional practices for about forty years.</p>
GK	<p>Oh, cool, we're going to de-bunk things today!</p>
CLH	<p>Yes! The first untrue belief is that some learners may experience a "silent period" when first introduced to a new language and the other is that there may be a difference between students' development of conversational fluency – or "playground English"--vs. their acquisition of academic language proficiency in the new language.</p>
GK	<p>Wait, I totally believe both of those things.</p>
CLH	<p>Well, maybe you'll get to keep believing them. Let's examine these two ideas to see if they are absolutes or if they can be mitigated with scaffolds and translanguaging.</p>
GK	<p>So, not really a debunking episode.</p>
CLH	<p>The "silent period" idea comes from the article "Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition," by Stephen Krashen. He describes the "silent period" as a phenomenon that takes place when a language learner is first exposed to a new language. According to this theory, a language learner is silent, or nonverbal, because they don't feel comfortable speaking in a new language. An English language learner in the silent period is said to produce little to no oral language in the second language for a contested period of time that can span from a few days to a year! However, Krashen writes that "the silent period in child second language acquisition would not be as long if more of the input the child hears is comprehensible." He suggests that the more comprehensible input we build into our instruction, the quicker children will transition out of the silent stage.</p>
	<p>Ah, so the silence is, of course, due to insecurity, and we can help newcomers by</p>

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

	<p>making our input more comprehensible. Listeners: Need a refresher on comprehensible input? Go back to Session 4 to review!</p> <p>And while you're flipping back, check out translanguaging in session 3. Translanguaging instructional practices allow ELLs to use their full linguistic repertoires as learners. By encouraging them to use their home language(s), we will enable students to communicate their ideas fully, particularly for newcomers who may not want to take many risks early on in speaking and writing English. So the silent period is not a given.</p> <p>What about the playground vs. classroom English lag?</p>
GK	I have no idea what that means.
CLH	<p>Back in the late 70s/early 80s a researcher named Jim Cummins proposed that there was a difference between what he called basic interpersonal communication skills, or BICS, and cognitive academic language proficiency, or CALP.</p> <p>This theory helped a generation of educators to explain why a student may be conversationally fluent in a language but still need additional support and time to complete grade-level academic work.</p> <p>More recent researchers have critiqued the theory as offering a deficit perspective of language learners, as there is no need to wait for ELLs to demonstrate a certain standard of language before they can participate in grade-appropriate learning. By encouraging translanguaging – and scaffolding language demands – ELLs get to leverage their entire linguistic repertoire to engage meaningfully in grade-level academic content as they learn language.</p> <p>Another critique of the original theory is that everyday conversation and oral language skills are far from “basic” and may in fact be the critical engine of intellectual work. Effective instruction begins by recognizing and encouraging all language and communication opportunities.</p>
GK	<p>So with the tools we now have, it isn't really necessary to let there be silent periods or delay grade-level instruction. We just need to be able to scaffold discussions in our classrooms.</p> <p>I'm going to predict that, like everything in teaching, it's all going to come down to deliberate planning.</p>
CLH	Say more.
GK	We have to think about the questions we ask, as well as anticipate the needs for a classroom discussion, just as we do to deliver more comprehensible input. Plan

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

	<p>ahead, review your plans for language demands, and teach the sentence stems for talking about the content along with the content.</p> <p>Let's imagine a math discussion on geometric shapes that students are looking at on a screen..</p>
CLH	<p>As the teacher, you may plan to ask: What do you notice about these shapes?</p> <p>You can anticipate possible student responses include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● There is a square. ● There's a rectangle and a rhombus. ● There are 3 shapes. ● They all have 4 sides. ● The shapes all have 4 sides. ● They all have parallel lines. ● Each shape has 2 sets of parallel lines
	<p>That regular practice helps you determine vocabulary and phrases that ELLs will probably need for this discussion. a rectangle, a square, a rhombus, numbers (such as 3 and 4), sides, shape, parallel lines, and 2 sets of parallel lines. These can be pre-taught or just posted with graphics. Finally, you can set up sentence stems, from simple to complex, to help students engage orally in the discussion.</p> <p>For example:</p> <p>I see a..., There are two....., There are some..., They all have..., Some shapes have..., etc.</p>
GK	<p>We can translate the question using Google Translate. Display the translation alongside the English question. If your ELL can't read their home language, use the audio function so they may listen to the question. Note, however, that you should use online translation tools to translate simple words or phrases only. Do not translate packets or heavy linguistic work. Accuracy of online translated language decreases as the language being translated becomes more complex.</p> <p>Create a bilingual mini-dictionary that includes translations for your tiered sentence stems and vocabulary words.</p>
CLH	<p>In addition to recognizing and planning for language demands, there are also translanguaging supports we can offer.</p>

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● First, individual scaffolds. If you have only one Portuguese student, for example, teach the ELL how to use the voice-to-text function on Google Translate. Also, provide the student with a personalized headset so they may listen repeatedly to the pronunciation of the text in English. The student may want to share the names of the shapes in Portuguese for the benefit of the whole class.● Second, partner scaffolds: Pair two Portuguese speakers to discuss the question in Portuguese first. Encourage students to try the English sentence stems and then encourage them to listen to their translated answers in English and practice the pronunciation with each other.● Third, small group scaffolds: Meet with a pair or small group of Portuguese students to model the use of the Google Translate tools and monitor their progress. Facilitate a bilingual conversation so ELLs can leverage their home language(s) to engage with the question meaningfully. As a teacher, use the Google Translate “conversation” and “transcribe” features on your phone. Model how to connect their ideas to the tiered sentence stems, when appropriate.
GK	<p>So let’s look at a couple of strategies that can be used across learning environments.</p> <p>In order to encourage focused conversations on content, students need to have a reason to speak to each other based on the task itself or the critical thinking level associated with the topic. Activities such as information gaps, debates, visual puzzles, card sorts, talking chips, and anticipation guides encourage students to interact in order to complete the assignment. Structuring the lesson tasks such that students have only part of the material and therefore must converse to exchange information deepens their content knowledge and can be a bridge to reading and writing tasks.</p>
CLH	<p>Talking chips is a strategy for student oral language interaction. Imagine the math lesson on shapes is followed by this activity:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Print out the shapes and cut them from cardstock or use math tiles representing each shape.● Pass one to each student.● Ask the students to label each shape and walk around the room until they form a trio with the two shapes they do not have. For example, rectangle, rhombus, and square will form a trio.● Once seated as a group, have students use the sentence stems to describe each shape as they place it in the center of the table. When one person is talking, this is their “talking chip”; therefore, everyone else must listen.

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once each group has placed all of their shapes in the center, they can compare and contrast the shapes. The teacher may choose to provide additional sentence stems or allow students to speak authentically based on the descriptions of each shape.• Students may be tasked with using these shapes – and additional ones provided along with tape – to create a cube, experimenting with the shapes and using the vocabulary to determine the number of sides needed.
GK	<p>I've got a variation on that!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Print or provide the shapes in different colors and have students use different sentence stems or language features based on the color of the shape they received (such as asking questions vs. giving statements; fact vs. opinion; or restating what was said).• You may also give more than one talking chip to each student, depending on the task.• You can use any sort of manipulative, such as paper clips, coins, candy, or dominoes, to form the talking chips. <p>By completing this activity in small groups, each student has a chance to speak about the content.</p>
CLH	<p>Another practice to try is an anticipation guide.</p> <p>This is a pre- and post-reading comprehension activity that builds conversation around a text. It can also be used before or after listening to a lecture or video clip.</p> <p>Imagine high school students are about to read "<i>Letter from a Birmingham Jail</i>" by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Before the activity, the teacher copies and pastes the text into WordSift to capture the 50 most frequent words in the text. Students partner to predict what they think the text will be about based on the words. They also note any words they would like to translate or define.</p> <p>Then they discuss the statements in the anticipation guide, and in the first pre-reading column, they select a tentative answer. Next, they read the article. While reading, students adjust their answers by marking their new thinking in the post-reading column. Finally, they write why they did or did not change their original answer by citing from the text in the fourth column. Note that higher-order thinking or ambiguous questions and statements elicit more language.</p>
GK	<p>Online variations of the anticipation guide can include offering the statements or questions through Google Forms or online polls to accomplish the same steps. The important aspect is that students are discussing and making sense of the material in pairs or small groups. For lower elementary grades or newcomers, anticipation</p>

M4-S6: Scaffolding Oral Language for ELLs

	<p>guides can include pictures or translations. They can be as long or as short as required and can include true/false, agree/disagree, multiple-choice items, open-ended questions, or a variety of these options</p>
CLH	<p>Now it's your turn! In this session, we have explored ways to support ELLs as speakers. In the following session, we will explore ways to support ELLs as writers. In both instances, we are leveraging the benefits of home languages and supporting the production of English.</p> <p>In your choice board and workbook, we will continue to explore scaffolds that support the oral participation of ELLs across learning environments.</p> <p>The goal of the TALE Academy is to help teachers rethink education so that everyone – students, families, educators, school leaders, and communities – all have the opportunity to succeed. You've just added another tool to your toolbox when you scaffold oral language development for ELLs across learning environments.</p> <p>Thanks for listening!</p>