SUBAREA I  LANGUAGE AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT

DOMAIN I  LANGUAGE STRUCTURE AND USE

COMPETENCY 1.0  Phonology and Morphology

Skill 1.1  Demonstrate knowledge of features of English phonology (e.g., phonemes, intonation patterns, pitch, modulation), with a focus on features that may inhibit communication for different language groups.

Phonology can be defined as “the way in which speech sounds form patterns” (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 1995). Phonology is a subset of linguistics, which studies the organization and systems of sound within a particular language. Phonology is based on the theory that every native speaker unconsciously retains the sound structure of that language and is more concerned with the sounds than with the physical process of creating those sounds.

When babies babble or make what we call “baby sounds,” they are actually experimenting with all of the sounds represented in all languages. As they learn a specific language, they become more proficient in the sounds of that language and forget how to make sounds that they don’t need or use.

PHONEMES, PITCH, AND STRESS

Phonemes, pitch, and stress are all components of phonology. Because they all affect the meaning of communications, they are variables that English Language Learners (ELLs) must recognize and learn.

Phonology analyzes the sound structure of the given language by:

- determining which phonetic sounds have the most significance
- explaining how these sounds influence a native speaker of the language

For example, the Russian alphabet has a consonant, which, when pronounced, sounds like the word rouge in French. English speakers typically have difficulty pronouncing this sound pattern, because inherently they know this is not a typical English sound (Diaz-Rico and Weed, 1995).
Mastering a sound that does not occur in the learner’s first language requires ongoing repetition, both hearing the sound and attempting to say it. The older the learner, the more difficult this process is, especially if the learner has only spoken one language before reaching puberty. Correct pronunciation may literally require years of practice because initially the learner may not hear the sound correctly. Expecting an ELL to master a foreign pronunciation quickly leads to frustration for both the teacher and the learner. With enough focused repetition, however, the learner may eventually hear the difference and then be able to imitate it. Inadequate listening and speaking practice will result in a persistent heavy accent.

**Phonemes** are the smallest units of sound that affect meaning, i.e., that distinguish two words. In English, there are approximately forty-four speech sounds but only twenty-six letters, so the sounds, when combined, become words. For this reason, English is not considered a phonetic language—a language in which there is a one-to-one correspondence between letters and sounds. Consider the two words, *pin* and *bin*. The only difference is the first consonant: the *p* in *pin* and the *b* in *bin*. This makes the sounds *p* and *b* phonemes in English, because the difference in sound creates a difference in meaning.

Focusing on phonemes to provide pronunciation practice allows students to have fun while they learn to recognize and say sounds. Pairs or groups of words that have a set pattern make learning easier. For example, students can practice saying or thinking of words that rhyme but begin with a different phoneme, such as *tan*, *man*, *fan*, and *ran*. Other groups of words might start with the same phoneme followed by different vowel sounds, such as *ten*, *ton*, *tan*, and *tin*. This kind of alliteration can be expanded into tongue twisters that students find challenging and entertaining.

Vowels and consonants should be introduced in a deliberate order to allow combinations that form real words, although “made-up” words that have no real meaning in English can also be encouraged when introducing new sounds.

**Pitch** determines the context or meaning of words or series of words. A string of words can communicate more than one meaning, for example, depending on whether it is presented as a question or statement. The phrase “I can’t go” is a statement if the pitch or intonation falls. However, the same phrase becomes the question “I can’t go?” if the pitch or intonation rises for the word *go*.

**Stress** can occur at a word or sentence level. At the word level, stresses on different syllables can actually modify a word’s meaning. Consider the word *conflict*. To pronounce it as a noun, one would stress the first syllable, as in *CONflict*. However, to use it as a verb, one would stress the second syllable, as in *conFLICT*.

In different dialects the same word is sometimes pronounced differently, even though both pronunciations have the same meaning. In some parts of the United States the word *insurance* is pronounced by stressing the second syllable, while in other parts of the country the first syllable is stressed.
At the sentence level, stress can also be used to vary meaning. In the following questions, notice how the meaning changes according to the stressed words:

- **He did that?** (Emphasis is on the person)
- **He did that?** (Emphasis is on the action)
- **He did that?** (Emphasis is on the object of the action)

This type of meaning differentiation is not easy for most ELL students to grasp, and requires innovative teaching, such as acting out the three different meanings. Still, since pitch and stress can change the meaning of a sentence completely, students must learn to recognize these differences. Not recognizing sarcasm or anger can cause students considerable problems in their academic and everyday endeavors.

Unlike languages such as Spanish or French, English has multiple pronunciations of vowels and consonants which contribute to making it a difficult language to learn. Phonetic rules are critical in learning to read and write, in spite of their numerous exceptions, but they do little to assist in the development of listening and speaking skills.

**PHONOGRAPHEMICS**

**Phonographemics** refers to the study of letters and letter combinations. Unlike most languages, in English one symbol can represent many phonemes. While some phonetic rules apply, English has numerous exceptions, which make it a complex language for nonnative speakers to learn.

In teaching English to speakers of other languages, the wide variation of phonemes represented by a single symbol must be taught and *drilled*. If it is difficult for native speakers to learn the English spelling system, it’s a great leap for nonnative speakers. Graphemes should be introduced long after spoken English. Students must first begin to be able to speak and hear the language before they can be taught to spell it.

The phonology of English is an important component of an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.

Phonographemic differences between words of English are a common source of confusion and thus need to be taught explicitly with plenty of learning activities to enable learners to acquire them sufficiently. Some areas of focus for the ESOL classroom include:

- **Homonyms**: Word forms that have two or more meanings, e.g., *can* (to be able) / *can* (a container)
- **Homographs**: Two or more words that have the same spelling or pronunciation but different meanings, e.g., *stalk* (part of a plant) / *stalk* (follow)
• **Homophones:** Two or more words that have the same pronunciation but different meanings and spelling, e.g., *wood/would, cite/sight, to/too/two*

• **Heteronyms:** Two or more words that have the same spelling but a different pronunciation and meaning, e.g., *Polish/polish*

Some useful activities for instruction would be to identify misspelled words, to recognize multiple meanings of words and sentences, to spell words correctly in a given context, and to match words with their meanings.

**Skill 1.2 Analyze how English Learners’ aural comprehension and pronunciation may be affected when English words contain phonemes that are unfamiliar to them or that do not transfer positively from the primary language (e.g., digraphs; diphthongs; schwa; initial, medial, and final consonant clusters) and identify strategies for supporting positive transfer from the primary language and for promoting English Learners’ auditory discrimination and production of English phonemes (i.e., ability to distinguish, identify, and manipulate phonemes and phonological patterns). Apply knowledge of basic sound patterns in English reading and writing with a focus on helping English Learners avoid interference from their primary language due to nontransferable features.**

English Learners’ aural comprehension and pronunciation may be affected by unfamiliar phonemes or those that do not transfer positively from their primary language. Some of the problematic phonemes are digraphs, diphthongs, and the schwa sound.

A **digraph** is any two letters that form a single sound, such as /ph/ in phone or /ea/ in read. For example, the two distinct /th/ digraphs found in the, there, and they or in three and threshold do not occur in many languages, such as Spanish. Mispronouncing words with this digraph is common. For example, pronouncing *tree* when the speaker intended to say *three* causes misunderstandings.

A **diphthong** occurs when two vowels combine to form a sound that slides from one to the other, such as /oy/ in boy or /ou/ in house. The most common diphthongs in English are /ai/, /aw/, and /oi/. These sounds cause difficulties in both pronunciation and comprehension. It is common for English Learners to substitute a sound that is found in the first language for the more difficult diphthong.

The **schwa** sound is made by every vowel in English: /a/ as in about, /e/ as in the, /i/ as in pencil, /o/ as in onion, /u/ as in but. Since the schwa sound does not occur in Spanish, as in several other languages, it is common for speakers to substitute more familiar vowel sounds, often with a loss of accuracy in pronunciation or comprehension by the listener.
When the mouth is trying for the first time to form sounds that are new to the speaker, it requires effort and concentration to achieve accuracy, and errors in pronunciation and aural comprehension often persist into the most advanced levels of English acquisition. This factor affects the teaching of literacy. In teaching beginning reading to a native speaker, it is common to begin with the short vowel sounds: /a/ is for apple, /e/ is for elephant, etc. Since it is an extremely difficult task for a student whose first language is Spanish to hear the differences among, for example, pat, pet, pit, pot, and put, it creates frustration for both the teacher and the student to insist upon perfect pronunciation or aural comprehension in the beginning or even intermediate stages of literacy.

For ELLs learning a new language, it is vital for native speakers to model the language. There are also specific issues that ELLs need to address in order to improve their language skills. To improve their pronunciation, ELLs need to work on:

- **Pronunciation:** To work on pronunciation, ELLs can find a dictionary and study its phonetic alphabet. Once they are familiar with it, they can choose ten to twelve words from a book and try to transcribe them and then pronounce them.

- **Intonation:** Some researchers doubt whether this can be taught (Barnes, 1988). However, it is important because one’s message may be misconstrued if the speaker uses an incorrect intonation pattern. One exercise is for ELLs to listen to a passage and mark the intonation pattern using forward slashes or backward slashes over the syllables or words to indicate a rising or falling pattern. Curved lines can also be used to indicate the appropriate rising and falling of the voice.

- **Stress:** Stress means accent. To teach ELLs how to accent words, dictionary assignments can be used. For sentences or longer texts, ELLs can mark the stress on words or syllables as the teacher dictates a short passage.

**Skill 1.3** Demonstrate knowledge of features of English morphology and principles of English word formation (e.g., morphemes, combining a root and affix, recognizing common roots derived from Greek and Latin that have English cognates, combining two lexical morphemes to create a compound, using inflectional endings), with a focus on English morphemes that may inhibit communication for different language groups.

**Morphology** refers to the process of how the words of a language are formed to create meaningful messages. Awareness of the principles of morphology in English allows teachers to provide meaningful activities that will help ELLs in the process of language acquisition.

**Morphemic analysis** requires breaking a word down into its component parts to determine its meaning. It shows the relationship between the root or base word and the prefix and/or suffix to determine the word's meaning.
A morpheme is the smallest unit of a language system that has meaning. These units are more commonly known as the root word, the prefix, and the suffix. They cannot be broken down into smaller units.

- **The root word or base word** is the key to understanding a word, because this is where the actual meaning is determined.
- **A prefix** acts as a syllable, which appears in front of the root or base word and can alter the meaning of the root or base word.
- **A suffix** is a letter or letters, which are added to the end of the word and can alter the original tense or meaning of the root or base word.

**Skill 1.4** Apply knowledge of morphology in order to identify strategies, including word analysis, for promoting relevant aspects of English Learners’ language development (e.g., vocabulary, spelling, fluency).

The following is an example of how morphemic analysis can be applied to a word:

- Choose a root or base word, such as *kind*.
- Create as many new words as possible by changing the prefix and suffix.
- New words would include *unkind*, *kindness*, *mankind*, and *kindly*.

Learning common roots, prefixes, and suffixes greatly helps ELLs to decode unfamiliar words. This can make a big difference in how well a student understands written language. Students who can decode unfamiliar words become less frustrated when reading in English and, as a result, are likely to read more. They have greater comprehension and their language skills improve more quickly. Having the tools to decode unfamiliar words enables ELL students to perform better on standardized tests because they are more likely to understand the question and answer choices.

Guessing at the meaning of words should be encouraged. Too often students become dependent on translating dictionaries, and do not develop morphemic analysis skills. Practice should include identifying roots, prefixes, and suffixes, as well as using morphemic knowledge to form new words.

ESOL learners need to understand the structure of words in English, and how words can be created and altered. Some underlying principles of the morphology of English include:

1. Morphemes can be free and able to stand by themselves (e.g., *chair*, *bag*) or they can be bound or derivational, needing other morphemes to create meaning (e.g., *read-able*, *en-able*).
2. Knowledge of the meanings of derivational morphemes such as prefixes and suffixes enables students to decode word meanings and create words in the language through word analysis, (e.g., *un-happy* means not happy).
Some morphemes in English provide grammatical rather than semantic information to words and sentences (e.g., of, the, and).

Words can be combined in English to create new compound words (e.g., key + chain = keychain).

Some principles of morphology from the native language can be transferred to English and may promote or interfere with the process of learning the second language.

**Skill 1.5** Demonstrate knowledge of phonological and morphological skills that promote fluent reading and writing (e.g., organized, systematic, explicit phonics; decoding skills; application of spelling patterns and sound-symbol codes [orthography]; structural analysis; application of students’ prior knowledge of the primary language to promote English language development in reading and writing).

Phonological decoding skills are closely related to prereading. Other phonological knowledge useful to students includes recognizing and creating rhymes, learning how to syllabicate, and phonemics. Only by explicitly and systematically teaching these skills can English Language Development (ELD) be achieved. ELD is also augmented by consistent spelling instruction. Words related to content need to be taught in an organized fashion. Structural analysis would include morphological analysis of the base word, prefixes, and suffixes. Students whose language is based on the Roman alphabet and has the same Latin basis as many English words may benefit from using their primary language to expand on the concepts being delivered in the English language classroom.

**Skill 1.6** Apply strategies for identifying and addressing English Learners’ difficulties related to phonology and morphology (e.g., applying principles of contrastive analysis to determine differences between the primary language and English, utilizing contrastive analysis resources in California State-adopted Reading/Language Arts/English Language Development [RLA/ELD] programs, using students’ prior knowledge of the primary language to promote English language development, applying vocabulary strategies such as context clues, word structure, and apposition to determine the meaning of unknown words).

**Contrastive analysis** involves comparing and contrasting the linguistic features of students’ primary language and English. By explaining to students how features of their native language compare with the English language, students can acquire a technique to support their ELD without necessarily having to rely on others. For example, the Spanish infinitives end in -ar, -er and -ir. These translate to the infinitive form in English: to + a verb. Another example from Spanish is the -cion (transportacion) word ending which is translated usually to -tion (transportation) in English, but sometimes it may be
-cion (suspicion). Contrastive analysis increases students’ awareness of language differences and improves vocabulary.

Other techniques for improving vocabulary are emphasis of context clues (What are the people/characters doing in the picture? What kind of weather are they having? Where is this taking place—in the city, in a park, on a beach? etc.), analysis of the word structure (What is the root/base word? What does the prefix mean? the suffix? How does this change the base word?), and apposition (What is the appositive in the first paragraph? Who is the teacher? Who is Mr. Brown?).

Skill 1.7  Demonstrate the ability to evaluate English Language Development (ELD) programs for adequate attention to the areas of phonology and morphology.

There are several important issues to consider in the evaluation of programs concerning adequate development of phonology and morphology. Both the National Reading Panel (2000) and the International Reading Association (1996-1997) have endorsed the teaching of phonics as a key component in the teaching of reading. However, several questions need to be addressed in evaluating programs: Which type of phonics (synthetic, analytic, linguistic, or a combination), how much time, and what kind of activities?

Alderson (1992) set forth several key questions to be answered when evaluating programs:

- What is the purpose of the activity?
- Who is the activity for: all students or only those students who have not mastered the skill?
- Who is going to evaluate the activity: the teacher, the student, or the class?
- What kind of content is being taught?
- What methodology will be used: visual, aural, or a combination of both?
- When will the lesson be taught: before reading/spelling instruction, during the instruction, or after the instruction?

Garinger (2002) proposed a composite evaluation checklist when considering materials for classroom use:

A. Practical Considerations
   - Value/Availability
     - Is it available locally?
     - Where can it be purchased (obtained)?
     - Cost-effectiveness?
   - Layout/Physical Characteristics
     - Interesting? Attractive? Appropriate mixture of graphics and text?
     - Clear? Well organized? Effective use of headings?
• Cultural Component
  o Target culture content? Accurate reflection of target culture?
  o Free of stereotypes?
  o Inclusive of all cultures? Sensitive?

B. Language-Related Considerations
• Skills (language and cognitive)
  o Does it integrate the skills well? Does it offer a good balance? Does it focus on the one(s) it claims to?
• Language
  o Authentic language?
  o Variety?
  o Recycling?
  o Grading/sequencing?
• Exercises
  o Is there a balance between free and controlled exercises?
  o Promote communication?
  o Meaningful?
  o Allow for negotiation?
• User Definition
  o Is it well defined?
  o Does the text content accurately reflect this definition?
  o Are there exact descriptions of what the students should be able to [do] once they have completed the texts (e.g., benchmark level)?

Texts and programs should take into consideration the students’ different skill levels. As with all skills, students will need varying amounts of phonics instruction. Some will be able to read with little or no phonics instruction and other will need more intensive and direct teaching (Schumm, 2006). Assessment and differentiated instruction are very important when teaching phonology and morphology.

COMPETENCY 2.0 SYNTAX AND SEMANTICS

Skill 2.1 Demonstrate knowledge of syntactic classes (e.g., noun, verb, adjective, preposition), syntactic rules in English (e.g., verb tense, subject-verb agreement), and English sentence patterns.

Syntax involves the order in which words are arranged to create meaning. Different languages use different patterns for sentence structure. Syntax also refers to the rules for creating correct sentence patterns. English, like many other languages, is a subject-verb-object language, i.e., in most sentences the subject precedes the verb, and the object follows the verb. ELLs whose native language follows a subject-verb-object pattern will find it easier to master English syntax.
LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

The process of second-language acquisition includes forming generalizations about the new language and internalizing its rules. During the silent period, before learners are willing to attempt verbal communication, they are engaged in the process of building a set of syntactic rules for creating grammatically correct sentences in the second language. We don’t yet fully understand the nature of this process, but we do know that learners must go through this process of observing, drawing conclusions about language constructs, and testing the validity of their conclusions. This is why learners benefit more from intense language immersion than from corrections.

Language acquisition is a gradual, hierarchical, and cumulative process. Learners must go through and master each stage in sequence, much like the stages Piaget theorized for learning in general. In terms of syntax, learners must master specific grammatical structures, first recognizing the difference between subject and predicate; putting subject before predicate; and learning more complex variations, such as questions, negatives, and relative clauses.

While all learners must pass through each stage to acquire the necessary language skills, learners use different approaches to mastering these skills. Some use cognitive processing procedures, thus their learning takes place more through thought processes. Other learners use psycholinguistic procedures, which employ speech practice as the principal means of learning.

Experts disagree on the exact definition of the stages, but a set of six general stages would include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Single words</td>
<td>I; throw; ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. S-V-O structure</td>
<td>I throw the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. <em>Wh</em>-fronting</td>
<td>Where are you?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. <em>Do</em> second</td>
<td>Do you like me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. <em>Y/N</em> inversion</td>
<td>Today I go to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. <em>Cancel inversion</em></td>
<td>She is not nice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experts disagree on the exact definition of the stages, but a set of six general stages would include:
Each progressive step requires the learner to use knowledge from the previous step, as well as new knowledge of the language. As ELLs progress to more advanced stages of syntax, they may react differently, depending on their ability to acquire the new knowledge needed for mastery. A learner who successfully integrates the new knowledge is a “standardizer”; he/she makes generalizations, eliminates erroneous conclusions, and increasingly uses syntactical rules correctly. However, for some learners, the next step may be more difficult than he/she can manage. These learners become “simplifiers”; they revert to syntactical rules learned at easier stages and fail to integrate the new knowledge. When patterns of errors reflect lower-level stages, the teacher must re-teach the new syntactical stage. If simplifiers are allowed to repeatedly use incorrect syntax, learning correct syntax becomes much more difficult.

Skill 2.2  Apply knowledge of syntactic rules and sentence patterns to provide accurate modeling of English syntax and to promote English Learners’ communicative competence.

ELL students need to be exposed to authentic, natural English in the classroom setting as well as outside the classroom. To achieve this goal, the ESOL teacher should be a good language model. Foreigners frequently complain that English speakers swallow their words or sound as if they have mashed potatoes in their mouths. The teacher needs to be aware of this and speak slowly and distinctly, especially when communicating new information. This will help the ELLs become acquainted with the rhythm patterns of English.

Yet, teachers should not be afraid to expose students to nonnative speakers of English. Today, the number of nonnative speakers of English is far greater than the number of native English speakers! Teachers can provide students with opportunities to hear a variety of speakers through listening exercises using taped stories and music, CDs, videos, field trips, and classroom visitors. A wide range of experiences will maintain high motivation and promote language learning.
Skill 2.3  Apply strategies for identifying and addressing English Learners' difficulties related to syntax (e.g., locating and using texts to learn about the syntax of English and students’ home languages, applying principles of contrastive analysis, utilizing contrastive analysis resources in California State-adopted RLA/ELD programs; using students’ prior knowledge of their primary language to promote English language development).

Barring physical disabilities or isolation from other humans, language is universal. Developing language is a lifelong process in one’s native language, and similar processes must be gone through to thoroughly acquire or learn a foreign language. Many studies have found that cognitive and academic development in the first language has an extremely important and positive effect on second-language learning (Bialystok, 1991; Collier, 1989, 1992; Garcia, 1994; Genesee, 1987, 1994; Thomas and Collier, 1995). It is, therefore, important that language learners continue to develop their first-language skills because the most gifted five-year-old is approximately halfway through the process of first-language development. From the ages of six to twelve, the child continues to acquire subtle phonological distinctions, vocabulary, semantics, syntax, formal discourse patterns, and the complexities of pragmatics in the oral system of his/her first language (Berko Gleason, 1993).

These skills can be transferred to learning a second language. When ELLs already know how to read and write in their first language, they can transfer many of their primary language skills to the target language. They have already learned the relationship between reading print and spoken language, that print can be used for many different things, and that writing conveys messages from its author. Grellet (1981) has stated that the “knowledge one brings to the text is often more important than what one finds in it.” Thus, teachers can build on this previous knowledge and address specifics in English as they arise.

Collier emphasizes that students who do not reach a threshold of knowledge in their first language, including literacy, may experience cognitive difficulties in their second language (Collier, 1987; Collier and Thomas, 1989, Cummins, 1981, 1991; Thomas and Collier, 1995). Uninterrupted cognitive development is key. It is a disservice to parents and children to encourage the use of the second language instead of the first language at home, because both parents and students are working at a level below their actual cognitive maturity level when using the second language. While nonnative speakers in kindergarten through second or third grade may do well if schooled in English part or all of the day, from fourth grade through high school, students with little or no academic or cognitive development in their first language do less and less well as they move into the upper grades where academic and cognitive demands are greater (Collier, 1995).
Skill 2.4  Analyze English words, phrases, and sentences with respect to meaning (semantics).

Semantics encompasses the meanings of individual words as well as combinations of words. Native speakers have used their language to function in their daily lives at all levels. Through experience, they know the effects of intonation, connotation, and synonyms. This is not true of foreign speakers. In an ESOL class, ELD focuses on teaching what the native speaker already knows as quickly as possible. Beginning ESOL lesson plans should deliberately build a foundation that will enable students to meet more advanced objectives.

Teaching within a specific context helps students to understand the meaning of words and sentences. When students can remember the context in which they learn words and recall how the words were used, they retain that knowledge and can use it when different applications of the same words are introduced.

Using words in a variety of contexts helps students reach deeper understanding of the words. They can then guess at new meanings that are introduced in different contexts. For example, the word conduct can be taught in the context of conducting a meeting or an investigation. Later the word conductor can be used in various contexts that demonstrate some similarity but have distinctly different uses, such as a conductor of electricity, the conductor of a train, or the conductor of an orchestra.

Second-language learners must learn to translate words and sentences that they already understand in their primary language into the language they wish to acquire. This can be a daunting task because of the many ways meaning is created in English. Voice inflection, variations of meaning, variations of usage, and emphasis are among the factors that affect meaning. The lexicon of language includes the stored meaning, contextual meaning from word association, knowledge of pronunciation and grammar, and morphemes.

Skill 2.5  Apply strategies for identifying and addressing difficulties English Learners have with words, phrases, and sentences with respect to semantics (e.g., words with multiple meanings, false cognates, idioms).

Students can benefit from reinforcing the meaning of different semantic items in multiple ways by using the following techniques: semantic feature analysis, mapping, rehearsing, summarizing, and writing.
Words with multiple meanings should be studied in context, and it should be pointed out that words do have multiple meanings. One glance at the word *get* in an unabridged dictionary will illustrate the numerous ways this word can be used. A good way to illustrate this point would be to show students the many uses of different words and their function in sentences. Demonstrating how words are used in different ways in a sentence (e.g., as a noun or a verb) is another way to illustrate the point. “I need a *record* <noun> of my *recording* <gerund> sales,” and “I *record* <verb> the data for my science project in my notebook” are examples of how to use record in different ways.

False cognates can be addressed as they come up by pointing out that not all apparent cognates really are cognates. Teachers who are fluent in the minority language may wish to keep a list of false cognates (with examples of their use in both languages) available for handouts or consultation.

Idioms, particularly those that cannot be translated literally, present a particular challenge to ELLs. Here again, creating contexts facilitates learning. Grouping idioms according to types of language use helps. Some idioms rely on synonyms, some on hyperbole, others on metaphor. Having students translate idioms from their native language into English strengthens their ability to appreciate the meaning of idioms. Also, creating their own original idioms increases understanding.

The way idioms are taught greatly affects how well they are remembered and the level of frustration the ELL experiences. Visual representations of idioms make meaning easier to understand and provide a memory cue to prompt recall. Using commercially produced illustrations or having students draw their own representations of the meaning makes learning idioms easier and more fun. Students can also write stories or perform skits to illustrate the meaning of idioms.

Skill 2.6 Demonstrate understanding of how to apply knowledge of syntactic and semantic context clues to help determine meaning and resolve language ambiguities.

Native speakers automatically use syntactic and semantic contextual clues to determine meaning and resolve ambiguities. For example, an unknown word such as *gniscious* does not give the reader much help in decoding its meaning. If encountered in a sentence such as, “Thanks for the *gniscious* breakfast,” or “Walking through the woods, he was horrified to encounter a *gniscious* beast,” the task becomes easier. When a word appears before a noun in English it is likely to be an adjective, describing the word that follows. Logic tells us that if someone is thankful for a *gnisious* meal, the word *gnisious* probably is similar to *delicious*, and the identical suffixes strengthen that hypothesis. On the other hand, if a walker is horrified to encounter a *gniscious* beast, the word might mean something similar to *vicious*. 
English learners have no such advantage. In many languages, such as Spanish, adjectives normally follow nouns rather than precede them. If the students’ vocabulary bank does not include delicious or vicious, there are no similarities upon which to draw. For this reason, the use of syntactic and semantic context clues must be directly taught.

GAMES TO HELP TEACH SYNTAX

Students often respond to games or game-like activities much more than to dry classroom lectures. The following games help learners derive meaning from working with syntax:

- **Cuisiniere rods**: Cuisiniere rods can be used to replace the words in sentences. Start students out with a blue rod to represent nouns and a white rod to represent verbs—the two main components of the English sentence. Give examples. Next, add in other components of the sentence, such as auxiliary verbs represented by a green rod, negative words represented by a black rod, and adjectives represented by a pink rod. As each new rod is introduced—over a period of days or weeks—give the students worksheets with the new sentence structures and ask them to point to the correct rod as they study the syntax. By manipulating the rods, students are able to visualize the correct word order of the sentence (McKay, 1987).

- **Shunting words**: After students read a text and find it difficult, the teacher types the text into a computer, removing all punctuation and spacing. Seat up to three students at a computer. Have them read, punctuate, and space the text. Circulate to help groups of students with sections they cannot figure out and with unknown vocabulary. This exercise works on word segmentation; practices seeing or hearing clauses; focuses on syntax, punctuation, and meaning; gives reading practice; and creates interaction with texts (Rinvolucri and Davis, 1995).

- **Expanded Sentences**: Have a student draw a simple picture on the board, such as a sports car with a girl and a boy in it. The teacher writes a short sentence such as, “Sports cars are expensive.” A student volunteer adds one word where the teacher indicates with a caret (^): “Sports cars are ^ expensive.” The game continues until no more words can be added to the sentence (Rinvolucri, 1984).

Skill 2.7 Demonstrate the ability to evaluate ELD programs for adequate attention to the areas of syntax and semantics.

Teachers should be able to evaluate ELD programs to ensure that the programs address at least the following elements of syntax and semantics:

- **Syntax**: the order in which words are arranged to create meaning
- **Semantics**: the meanings of individual words, as well as combinations of words
- **Idioms**: figures of speech where the literal meaning is not the intended meaning
• **Perfunctory speech**, or “empty language”: has little meaning but is important in social exchanges

**COMPETENCY 3.0  LANGUAGE FUNCTIONS AND VARIATION**

**Skill 3.1** Demonstrate knowledge of the different social functions of language (e.g., to inform, amuse, control, persuade).

Halliday classified language into the following **functional categories** (1985):

- **Instrumental**: language as a means of satisfying needs or acquiring things, e.g., asking the teacher for supplies in art class, requesting a book from the librarian
- **Regulatory**: used to control the behavior, feelings, or attitudes of others, e.g., creating role-plays with others, organizing tasks in project work
- **Interactional**: social interaction, working with others, e.g., cooperative group work on diverse classroom projects and activities
- **Personal**: expressions of individuality, pride, and awareness of self, e.g., sharing and telling about oneself and personal experiences
- **Heuristic**: asking and seeking knowledge, e.g., asking how something works, explaining ideas in a story, or retelling a story
- **Imaginative**: making up stories and poems, creating new worlds, e.g., using wordless books or pictures to create stories, using dramatics to act out an original story
- **Informative**: sharing information, descriptions, or ideas, e.g., sharing ideas about what to include in a project, explaining what happened the night before or in a movie
- **Divertive**: jokes, puns, riddles, language play, e.g., telling jokes to others

**Skill 3.2** Demonstrate knowledge of language structures appropriate to specific academic language functions (e.g., describing, defining, explaining, comparing, contrasting, making predictions, persuading) across the content areas.

Certain words, phrases, and structures are used in academic language to express ideas in ways that others can understand. Teachers can share vocabulary or structure lists with students so they are aware of the variety of language available to them and what is expected from them when writing or speaking academic language.
Some of these are listed below:

| Describing       | • The … has all the colors of the rainbow.  
|                  | • It was as boxy as ….  
|                  | • It is taller/shorter/fatter/heavier than... |
| Defining         | • This word means…  
|                  | • History defines …as…  
|                  | • It really means… |
| Explaining       | • One way to interpret her words is…  
|                  | • His actions mean that… |
| Comparing        | • This is similar to an event…  
|                  | • That part was like when I … |
| Contrasting      | • This is different from… because…  
|                  | • Today, this could mean that… |
| Making predictions | • We have seen many new …, but I foresee…  
|                  | • I think that… |
| Persuading       | • I know what you mean, but I believe that…  
|                  | • There is a lot of evidence that…, but the crux of the matter is… |

Skill 3.3 Identify different types of variation that occur in a language (e.g., dialects, historical variation, social versus academic language) and demonstrate knowledge of why language variation evolves (e.g., reasons involving geographic, political, cultural, social, and vocational issues).

Sociolinguistics is the study of how social conditions influence the use of language. Social factors such as ethnicity, religion, gender, status, age, and education all play a role in how individuals use language. Dialects differ depending on these and other factors. Sociolinguistics tries to understand the relationship between language and social elements. Different dialects, or how language is spoken, are frequently referred to today as varieties of a language. Varieties of a language may be considered separate languages if there is a strong literary, religious, or other tradition.

Historical variation may occur in the sound system, the grammar, or the lexicon. It may be a gradual change in the pronunciation of a word, or it may be abrupt, as in the case of pidginization of the language when contact with a new culture occurs. It is beyond anyone’s control, but language is constantly changing. In the words of H. L. Mencken, “A living language is like a man suffering incessantly from small haemorrhages, and what it needs above all else is constant transactions of new blood from other tongues. The day the gates go up, that day it begins to die.”