Realizing Opportunities for English Learners in the Common Core English Language Arts and Disciplinary Literacy Standards

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Abstract

As educators across the US prepare for the new Common Core English Language Arts and disciplinary literacy standards, they are being inundated with advice—from policy organizations, curriculum vendors, professional development providers, educational associations, textbook publishers, academics, and the writers of the Standards themselves. It is essential for language and literacy researchers to help articulate fundamental understandings about the development and use of language and literacy relevant to the challenges facing English learners (ELs) in light of the new Standards, and to do so in ways that are accessible and useful for educators and policy makers. This article, a joint effort between two researchers with expertise in the education of ELs and one of the writers of the Standards, represents an attempt to explicate some of the predominant challenges facing ELs in the Standards and to provide guidance and recommendations based on relevant research and theory. The article is envisioned as a starting point for more extended discussions among language and literacy researchers regarding what knowledge and understandings from our field(s) are most relevant to informing the challenges that lie ahead—and how scholars might best engage with educational practitioners and policy makers who will be called upon to act, often quickly and decisively, to implement the Standards. We argue that equitably and effectively educating ELs during the new common standards era requires shared responsibility—between researchers and practitioners, between teachers and other educational personnel, between language arts educators and those in other disciplines, and among academics with different specializations. We conclude with a postscript (written with Aida Walqui) describing an instructional exemplar designed to embody some of the shifts that will be necessary in order to realize opportunities for ELs in light of the new common standards.
Students who meet the Standards readily undertake the close, attentive reading that is at the heart of understanding and enjoying complex works of literature. They habitually perform the critical reading necessary to pick carefully through the staggering amount of information available today in print and digitally. They actively seek the wide, deep, and thoughtful engagement with high-quality literary and informational texts that builds knowledge, enlarges experience, and broadens worldviews. They reflexively demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic. In short, [they] develop the skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening that are the foundation for any creative and purposeful expression in language (Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, p. 3).

Enacting this vision for 21st Century literacy, laid out in the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects (hereafter referred to as the “the Standards”), clearly presents challenges for all students—and for the teachers and schools responsible for educating them. For students from homes where English is not the dominant language, who will be called upon to engage in the practices called for by the Standards in a language they are still in the process of developing, these challenges are particularly acute. Such students, often referred to as English Learners (ELs), now comprise ten percent of the total US public school population, with much higher proportions in some of the country’s most populated states (e.g. California, New York, Illinois, Illinois).

1 The terms English learner and English language learner have been criticized for operating from a deficit perspective because they do not take into account students’ bilingual resources, and terms such as “emergent bilingual” (García & Kleifgan, 2010) have been suggested as an alternative. While we agree with such considerations, we utilize the term “EL” because it is the terminology employed in the Standards themselves and it references the ways in which schools, districts, and states, categorize these learners according to federal and state guidelines.
Florida), and exponentially increasing populations in regions previously unaccustomed to speakers of languages other than English (e.g. the Southeast, parts of the Midwest, and the Pacific Northwest) (see Valdés & Castellon, 2011). In addition to those students currently designated as ELs, large numbers of former ELs have been reclassified as “fluent English proficient” but are still in the process of acquiring the English language and literacy necessary to succeed in increasingly challenging academic settings in English language arts and across the curriculum (Olsen, 2010).

As teachers, schools, districts, and states across the United States begin to prepare for the Standards, they are being inundated with advice—from policy organizations, curriculum vendors, professional development providers, educational associations, textbook publishers, academics, and the writers of the Standards themselves. In this context, it is essential for language and literacy researchers to play a role in helping to articulate fundamental understandings about the development and use of language and literacy relevant to the challenges facing ELs in light of the new Standards, and to do so in ways that are accessible and useful for those responsible for educating students.

This article, a joint effort between two language and literacy researchers with expertise in the education of ELs and one of the writers of the Standards, represents an attempt to explicate some of the predominant challenges facing ELs in the Standards and to provide guidance and recommendations based on relevant research and theory. We consider what the ELA Standards call upon all students to do with language and literacy, discuss particular challenges facing ELs, and draw on research and theory to offer guideposts for instructional approaches to meet those challenges and maximize the potential affordances for ELs. Our intention is not to render a judgment regarding the content of the Standards, the assumptions about literacy upon which they
are based, or the appropriateness of the Standards themselves for ELs. Those are important topics for discussion and debate that have already had no shortage of participants. Nor is our purpose to provide a comprehensive or even systematic review of the empirical literature available on the language and literacy development or academic achievement of ELs (for such reviews, see for example American Educational Research Association, 2004; Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006; Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010; Saunders & Goldenberg, 2010).

Rather, we envision this article as a starting point for what hopefully will be extended and productive discussions among language and literacy researchers regarding what knowledge and understandings from our field(s) are most relevant to informing the challenges that lie ahead as schools move toward the new Standards with ELs—and how we might best engage with educational practitioners and policy makers who will be called upon to act, often quickly and decisively, to implement the Standards. In short, we are concerned with considering how opportunities for ELs presented by the Standards can be realized—that is, both understood and actualized, as the Standards are implemented across the United States.

Given the new demands presented by the Common Core standards, along with increasing linguistic diversity in US schools, the education of ELs can no longer be considered the sole responsibility of a small cadre of language specialists teaching specially designed courses for ELs, such as English Language Development (ELD), English as a Second Language (ESL), or English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses. Instead, preparing ELs to meet the Common Core standards must become a shared responsibility among all educators, including teachers of “mainstream” English language arts, as well as those in other content areas. The ELA standards themselves, by virtue of the inclusion of disciplinary literacy standards and a vision of career and college readiness that requires “an appreciation of the norms and conventions of each
discipline” (p. 60, 63), already point to the fact that literacy instruction involves collaboration among teachers across disciplines. The need for mainstream English teachers, second language specialists, and teachers in other disciplines to share responsibility for the education of ELs is further highlighted by the crucial role that language and literacy will play in meeting the Common Core State Standards in Mathematics (Moschkovich, 2012) and the Next Generation Science Standards (Quinn, Lee, & Valdés, 2012).

If the education of ELs can no longer be seen as the sole responsibility of a small subset of the teaching population, neither can research relevant to this population be constrained to knowledge generated by any single field. As Valdés (2004) has argued, boundaries among various subfields within language and literacy research have led to “a series of unconnected conversations that often fail to be heard by scholars who are members of other closely related professions,” particularly around the concept of academic language (p. 103). Valdés suggests that little progress can be made in the education of ELs without shared understandings, or at least productive conversations among colleagues across subfields and academic professions regarding key issues such as the teaching and learning of academic language.

We argue that each of the ELA Standards’ domains (reading, writing, listening/speaking, and language), although superficially recognizable as the traditional purview of both ELA and second language instruction, manifests shifts in how language and literacy instruction has often been approached by both educational communities. Following van Lier and Walqui (2012), we argue that creating the conditions under which ELs will be able to meet the Standards involves a shift away from traditional theories conceptualizing language principally either as “form” or “function” and away from concomitant approaches to language instruction that set about to “teach” language in isolation from academic work in the various school disciplines (see also
Valdés et al., 2011). Instead, what is needed is an understanding of language as “action” that is developed, with support, in and through meaningful and engaging activities across the curriculum (van Lier & Walqui, 2012). At the same time, we highlight understandings about second language learning and developing literacy in a second language that are crucial to envisioning the support necessary for ELs to engage in such action and activity.

After proposing a number of considerations that must underlie any efforts to create the instructional conditions necessary for ELs to engage with and meet the Standards, we discuss the challenges and opportunities for ELs associated with each of the Standards’ domains, offering insights for addressing the challenges and realizing the opportunities.

**Considerations for EL Instruction in the Age of New Standards**

**ELs Represent a Diverse Population**

Any discussions about the needs of ELs and appropriate curricular supports must begin with an acknowledgment that ELs represent a diverse population, with variation by age, grade level, native languages, language proficiency levels, literacy background both in English and other languages, and quality of previous schooling. Students classified as EL include those who have arrived very recently in the US, many of whom speak and understand little or no English. Other ELs have more experience with English and have developed enough oral proficiency and literacy in the language to engage in some kinds of academic and social tasks, but have difficulty with others. Some appear to be quite fluent in English but have oral or written English that is marked by “second language” features, along with underdeveloped academic literacy skills, which may lead some educators to believe they are still in need of ESL classes. Some researchers (e.g. Valdés, Bunch, Snow, & Lee, 2005) use the terms *incipient* bilinguals, *ascendant* bilinguals, and *fully functional* bilinguals to highlight the distinctions among students from these different
backgrounds (see also Enright, 2011; Olsen, 2010; Walqui, 2005). Meanwhile, ELs have a range of experiences with literacy in their home languages. Among immigrant students, some have had curtailed opportunities to develop reading and writing in their home language(s) due to interrupted or inadequate formal education; others arrive in the US with first language academic literacy skills that are quite strong. Some ELs born in the US have attended bilingual education programs designed to provide them with a strong foundation in first-language literacy; others have attended English-only elementary schools without opportunities for such development. It is also important to keep in mind that once students are re-designated as fluent English proficient, they continue to use and develop each of their languages as circumstances allow and require, exhibiting normal and healthy features of bilingualism that will by definition contrast with the language practices of monolingual speakers of English (Grosjean, 1982; Valdés, 2003, Valdés, Capitelli, & Alvarez, 2011).

All Learning Builds on Students’ Prior Knowledge and Experiences

Because all learning builds on students’ prior knowledge and experiences, instruction for ELs must consider and expand on what ELs bring to the classroom (Walqui & Heritage, 2012). As articulated in the National Research Council’s review of How People Learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2000), key findings from research in the learning sciences indicate that students “come to the classroom with preconceptions about how the world works,” that if these “initial understandings” are not engaged, students either fail to learn new concepts at all or only learn them well enough to perform on a test, and that “teachers must draw out and work with the preexisting understandings that their students bring with them” (pp. 14-20). Regarding reading comprehension, Pearson (in press), argues that the Standards as written are generally consistent with the “construction-integration” model advanced over the past decade and a half (e.g. Kintsch,
1998). In this model, readers’ knowledge plays a crucial role both in building an accurate representation of the “textbase” and in creating the “situation model” that represents “the coherent mental representation of the events, actions, and conditions in the text” (Pearson, in press, p. 8; see also Duke, Pearson, Strachan, & Billman, 2011). For ELs, it is particularly important to connect instruction with students’ prior knowledge. Second language learners are more likely to comprehend and be able to engage in a language they are developing if they have some familiarity with the topics being discussed. Moreover, because language and learning are always culturally situated, ELs draw not only on their existing knowledge of topics and concepts under consideration, but also on notions of the role of schooling more generally, social roles and norms in the classroom, and the relationship between language and learning (Walqui & Heritage, 2012). Importantly, all of this does not imply that instruction for ELs should be limited to topics and uses of language that students are already familiar with. On the contrary, the point is to build on students’ prior knowledge and language resources to create the conditions under which learning and language development can most productively flourish.

**ELs Develop Language and Literacy as they Participate in Meaningful, Engaging, and Challenging Activities**

According to Widdowson (1979), whether language instruction is organized around grammatical structures or functions, “in both cases the essential design is an inventory of language units in isolation and abstraction” (p. 247, quoted in van Lier & Walqui, 2012, p. 3; see also Valdés et al., 2011). In contrast, van Lier and Walqui (2012) describe a “language as action” perspective that understands language to be “intimately connected to all other forms of action, physical, social, and symbolic” and thus an “expression of agency, embodied and embedded in the environment” (p. 4). Similar shifts are necessary in conceptions of literacy, traditionally seen
as the acquisition of autonomous cognitive skills (Street, 1984). As Hull and Moje (2012) point out, literacy involves both social practices and cognitive processes, and therefore reading and writing, as well as other forms of meaning-making, always represent activity (whether intended or not by teachers) in which participants have different purposes and take on different roles and identities.

If language and literacy at their heart represent forms of action, then they are developed in the context of engagement in activity. For ELs called upon to meet the new standards, not only in English language arts but also in mathematics and science, that activity revolves around learning in a variety of disciplinary settings. That is, ELs learn language as they learn content or, as Walqui and Heritage (2012) have put it, language development and cognitive development are interrelated and mutually dependent. By participating in meaningful and engaging activities as part of instruction in other subject areas, ELs—as well as other students—have the potential not only to learn the target content, but also the particular ways in which language and literacy are used for different audiences and purposes in different disciplines (Valdés et al., 2005; Lee & Spratley, 2010; Schleppegrell, 2004; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008;). Importantly, as we discuss next, for many students still in the process of learning the language of instruction, various types and levels of support may be needed during this meaningful and engaging activity in order to fulfill such language and learning opportunities.

“Macro” and “Micro” Scaffolds Facilitate Students’ Apprenticeship into Communities of Practice and Lead Toward Independence and Autonomy

If ELs’ language and literacy develops through engagement with meaningful disciplinary activities, then support for that development must occur in the context of such activity. While the exact nature of the support, as well as the setting in which it is provided, will vary according to
specific backgrounds and needs of the student, in all cases the goal should be the facilitation of students’ apprenticeship into communities of practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991) with teachers and fellow students in ways that lead toward ELs’ independence and autonomy over time (Walqui, 2006; Walqui & Heritage, 2012; Walqui & van Lier, 2010). In considering how to support ELs, teachers need to attend to the integration of language and content within and across lessons and units, what Schleppegrell and O’Hollaraon (2011) call “macro-scaffolding,” as well as the “micro-scaffolding” during the “moment-to-moment work of teaching” (p. 70). Relatedly, Walqui and colleagues (Walqui, 2006; Walqui & Heritage, 2012; Walqui & van Lier, 2010) distinguish between scaffolding as structure (the planned curricular progression over time and the pedagogical procedures designed to implement that progression) and scaffolding as process (the interactive process among students and teachers to achieve what is hoped for by the structural scaffolds). In all cases, scaffolding is contingent, collaborative, and interactive (van Lier, 2004), and involves “a blend of the planned and the improvised, the predicted and the unpredictable, routine and innovation” (Walqui, 2006, p. 164). Crucially, scaffolding involves envisioning what students will be able to do in the future that they cannot currently do. As such, “[r]ather than simplifying the tasks or the language, teaching subject matter content to English learners requires amplifying and enriching the linguistic and extralinguistic context, so that students do not get just one opportunity to come to terms with the concepts involved, but in fact may construct their understanding on the basis of multiple clues and perspectives encountered in a variety of class activities” (Walqui, 2006, p. 169, emphasis added). Because scaffolding is ultimately designed for teachers to “hand over” authority and for students to “take over” their own learning, it should always be limited to “just enough” and “just in time,” requiring that
scaffolds be consistently “changed, transformed, restructured, or dismantled” (Walqui, 2006, p. 165).

**Practices Called for by the Standards May or May Not Align with ELs’ Experiences, Values, and Cultural Backgrounds**

Practices called for by the Standards, such as argument and critique, are grounded in particular socially and culturally developed values and practices that may or may not align with those of students from different backgrounds. Students from non-dominant linguistic and cultural groups may position themselves in various ways vis-à-vis mainstream expectations (Canagarajah, 2004; Pennycook, 2000). Socialization into new academic discourse communities therefore involves not only the acquisition of new language and literacy skills, but also potential “internal and interpersonal struggles” and “emotional investment and power dynamics” (Duff, 2010, p. 170). Explicit classroom discussion of the social and cultural values and practices implicit in the Standards can help students recognize their own positions in relation to these expectations. Teachers can then build upon such understandings to help students expand their linguistic repertoires to include forms of academic discourse, recognizing this growth as a complex, long-term process that involves not only language proficiency but also social, cultural, and identity-related considerations.

**Recognizing ELs’ Language Development in the Context of Common Core Standards Requires a Shift in How Language is Conceived of andMeasured**

Learning languages involves expanding linguistic repertoires in order to engage in a wide variety of situations, with a wide variety of audiences, for a wide variety of purposes (Valdés et al., 2005). With support, ELs can build such repertoires and engage productively in the kinds of language and literacy practices called for by the Standards for both ELA and other disciplines,
even though their developing language will be marked by “non-native” or imperfect features of English. Recognizing ELs’ language and literacy development, therefore, requires a shift from a focus on students’ acquisition of “native-like” or “standard” English for its own sake toward their expansion of linguistic repertoires. While ELs are able to perform the range of practices called for in the Standards, the language they use will undoubtedly include features that distinguish these students from their monolingual English-speaking peers. To learn to perform analytical tasks and associated language practices over time, ELs need teacher support and access to a “rich language environment” in which students engage and make meaning in authentic learning activities (p. 8), rather than one that attempts to teach forms and functions of language in isolation.

Realizing Opportunities for ELs Involves Collaborative Efforts Across a Number of Different Instructional Settings

Because language and literacy practices vary from discipline to discipline (Lee & Spratley, 2010; Olsen, 2010; Schleppegrell, 2004; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008; Valdés et al., 2005; Wineburg, Martin, & Monte-Sano, 2011), and because the development of such language and literacy requires access to and participation in the contexts in which it is used (Gutierrez, 1995; Hawkins, 2004; Valdés, 2004), realizing opportunities for ELs must involve collaborative efforts across a number of different instructional settings, including ELA, ELD, bilingual education programs, and other content-area classrooms. If developing language and literacy for a wide variety of disciplinary purposes is contingent upon participation in authentic communities of practice, then “mainstream” disciplinary instructors play a critical role. This does not imply that there is not a role for ESL teachers, or, for students who have newly arrived to the United States (the “incipient bilinguals” mentioned earlier), separate classes to offer them support. In the
context of developing the language and literacy necessary for meeting the new Standards, however, the role and responsibility of ELD instruction must be revisioned to become one of preparing students for engagement with the kinds of disciplinary communities of practice discussed above, rather than the “teaching” of the forms and functions of a second language in isolation from those practices.

**ELs and the ELA Standards: Challenges, Opportunities, and Recommendations**

Turning now to our discussion of the challenges facing ELs in each domain and suggestions for how the concurrent opportunities might be realized, we organize our discussion around the four domains called for by the ELA Standards (reading, writing, listening/speaking, and language), focusing on key practices highlighted within and across the domains: engaging with complex texts; using evidence in writing and research; speaking and listening in order to work collaboratively and present ideas; and developing the language to do all of the above effectively.

**Reading: Engaging with Complex Texts to Build Knowledge Across the Curriculum**

The Standards require students to read and comprehend both literary and informational texts that represent steadily increasing complexity as they progress through school. Text complexity, according to the Standards, involves not only the grammatical features of a text and its vocabulary demands, but also elements such as the multiple levels of meaning embedded in a text, the explicitness with which the author’s purpose is stated, the typicality of genre conventions, and the extent to which the text employs figurative language (ELA Standards, Appendix X). The Standards require that 30% of the complex texts read by students at the elementary level be informational in character—shifting to 70% in high school—reflecting the role of texts in building students’ knowledge across K-12 disciplines and after high school.
Accessing and comprehending texts featuring complexity of the kinds outlined above present challenges for all students as they grapple with new and cognitively complex ideas and concepts, particularly for those who have had limited access to such texts either at home or at school. Those reading in a second language face additional challenges, as they are called upon to process “intricate, complicated, and, often, obscure linguistic and cultural features accurately while trying to comprehend content and while remaining distant from it in order to assess the content’s value and accuracy” (Bernhardt, 2011, p. 19). To meet this challenge, second language readers draw on a variety of potential resources, including knowledge of the (second) language they are reading in, literacy skills in their first language, reading comprehension strategies, background knowledge related to the target reading, and interest and motivation. While research on second language readers has only begun to study the ways in which these various factors interrelate, it is likely that second language readers use their more-developed resources in particular areas to support reading comprehension as they develop in other areas. (Bernhardt, 2011).

Beginning-level ELs in the younger grades learning to read for the first time face particular challenges, as they attempt to learn to decode written text in a language they are at the very early stages of acquiring. The use and development of oral language is particularly important at this stage, as it serves as one foundation that students use to build early reading skills. The standards themselves emphasize the importance in the early grades of students’ participating in discussions, asking questions, sharing their findings, and building on others’ ideas. It is important to note that research has shown that ELs can develop literacy in English even as their oral proficiency in English develops. Meanwhile, ELs’ early literacy experiences, including those in students’ first languages, support subsequent literacy development, and “time
spent on literacy activity in the native language—whether it takes place at home or at school—is not time lost with respect to English reading acquisition” (Riches & Genesee, 2006, p. X; see also Goldenberg & Coleman, 2010).

Throughout the grades, learning about ELs’ language and literacy backgrounds, interests, and motivations provides teachers with clues as to what supports might help students navigate the linguistic and textual challenges presented by different kinds of texts. Understanding students’ knowledge and interests does not mean that only texts that already fit within ELs’ “comfort zones” should be assigned. Indeed, one of the opportunities afforded by the Standards is the promise of access to a wide variety of texts that can expand those comfort zones. Nor does it mean “simplifying” texts to attempt to meet students reading levels. Research on second language reading of complex texts indicates that text simplification is actually ineffective for promoting comprehension and may even be counterproductive (see Bernhardt, 2011, pp. 59-60).

Leveraging students’ existing background knowledge, and building new knowledge, can be accomplished in a number of ways before and during a lesson or unit of study—without preempting the text, translating its contents for students, telling students what they are going to learn in advance of reading a particular text, or “simplifying” the text itself.

Alternatives for leveraging and building background knowledge include pre-reading activities and conversations that access and build on students’ background knowledge and set up excitement and purpose for reading in a unit; text annotations that gloss crucial vocabulary or provide necessary contextual information without paraphrasing the text for students; and activities during and after reading that allow students to engage in knowledge-building with their classmates and teachers (Walqui & vanLier, 2010). Crucial to all of the above is teachers’ understanding that texts are approached differently for different purposes, and that students need
opportunities to approach texts with these varied purposes in mind. Also important to understand is that readers play multiple roles when approaching any text. Gibbons (2002), for example, draws on Luke and Freebody (1990) to point out that readers are always simultaneously code breakers, text participants, text users, and text analysts (see also Schleppegrell & Colombi, 2002).

A consideration of students’ second language proficiency, literacy backgrounds, and background knowledge can also inform instructional efforts to enhance the strategic moves students can apply to engage successfully in independent reading across the curriculum—especially when called upon to read texts beyond their English language proficiency levels (Bernhardt, 2011). For example, instruction can do the following:

• Induce readers to consider (or even research) the topic at hand using more accessible texts (including those in a students’ L1 for ELs who read in their first languages) in preparation for reading more difficult texts as part of the same lesson or unit.

• Assist readers in deciding which words in a given text are critical for particular uses of the text and which can be skipped.

• Focus readers’ attention on meaning-critical grammatical structures (and how those might compare with how grammar is used to make similar meaning in students’ first languages).

• Build on and expand readers’ knowledge about how different kinds of texts are structured.

• Focus readers’ attention on specific features of text complexity by choosing authentic and original texts that emphasize one or two features at a time (such as a linguistically more accessible text that features multiple meanings, a lexically dense piece with a simpler grammatical structure, or a text in the students’ native language that includes the challenging text structures of an unfamiliar genre).
• Integrate a focus on vocabulary-building with meaningful activities centered around texts (e.g., Kelley, Lesaux, Kieffer, & Faller, 2010; Scott, Skobel, & Wells, 2008).

When envisioning how to support ELs’ reading of the kinds of complex texts called for by the Standards, and how to recognize students’ developing ability to do so, it is also important to consider how “comprehension” is defined and measured. Aukerman (2008, p. 54) has pointed out that struggling readers’ ability to “make decisions about a text and to subsequently evaluate and revise those decisions”—arguably, we might add, the kind of reading valued by the Standards—may be masked, and even stifled, by instruction that views textual analysis as “correct” inferences as to what a text “really” means, as well as by a dominant focus on the use of pre-ordained sets of “reading comprehension” strategies. For ELs, who may be called upon to read texts with increasingly unfamiliar content matter expressed in language that is beyond their English proficiency levels, it is especially important to foster and recognize students’ use of texts and textual evidence for sense-making, even if their inferences and processes do not initially match those of the more experienced readers or more proficient speakers of English. In terms of fostering—and recognizing—students’ ability to make sense of complex text, both literary and informational, ELs are well served by opportunities to explore—and justify with evidence—their own “textual hypotheses,” even if their initial claims diverge from those of the teacher (Aukerman, 2008).

**Writing: Using Evidence to Analyze, Inform, and Argue**

The Standards call upon students, by the time they graduate, to be adept at sharing information accurately to help readers better grasp a topic or concept, presenting arguments logically to defend interpretations or judgments, and crafting written language skillfully to achieve their purposes. The Standards draw on studies showing that a nexus of skills—using
evidence, analyzing information in writing, and conducting research—is essential for success in the argument-based culture of universities as well as today’s diverse, information-rich professional environments (see Graff, 2003; Postman, 1997; Williams & McEnerney, n.d.). As students progress through the grades, the Standards ask them to demonstrate their growing ability to cite specific evidence in defense of the claims they make as well as consider the strength of the evidence others provide when making arguments. The Standards also incorporate and integrate a focus on research skills in order to prepare students to ask questions and solve problems independently. In relation to research-based writing specifically, ELs not only face the common obstacles all students experience in attempting to gather, manage, and organize the flow of information; they also must analyze and evaluate what they read while negotiating a second language. This research process requires students to read complex texts and use evidence both orally and in writing while navigating conventions of textual ownership and citations, an area that offers challenges for all students in an electronic age but that can be particularly challenging for EL students who have learned these culturally defined practices outside of US academic settings (Flowerdew & Li, 2007; Pecorari, 2003).

Just as teachers can carefully scaffold the reading of complex texts, they can also assist ELs to develop the ability to write for the wide variety of audiences and purposes emphasized by the Standards. Like first language writing (Loban, 1976; Henderson, 1981; Graves, 1983), second language writing develops gradually over time, with considerable variation in individual learners’ progress through different stages of development (Ellis, 1994; Fu, 2009; Valdés, 2001). However, second language writing development is also distinct. Although second language writers are still acquiring oral language proficiency in English, they already possess age-appropriate oral language proficiency in their home language(s), and depending on their age and
background, some may also have home-language literacy skills from which they can draw (Harklau, 2002). EL writers, however, are a diverse group. Some young children are exposed to writing for the first time in English-medium ELD or ELA classes. Others learn to write in more than one language in bilingual classrooms, at home, or in the community. At the secondary level, some ELs bring first-language literacy skills to the task of writing in English, but many write only in English, not having acquired home language literacy in the school or home. For individuals with prior literacy background, writing skills can transfer across languages, although questions remain regarding how these processes occur (see Grabe, 2003; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

ELs’ opportunities for classroom writing also vary according to teacher expectations, course placement, and content area (Fu, 1995; Harklau, 1999; Hartman & Tarone, 1999; Valdés, 2001), and for students with limited exposure to English outside of school, writing development may occur very slowly (Valdés & Sanders, 2006). Just as print exposure improves students’ long-term writing development in their first language (Wagner & Stanovich, 1996), the features of texts read by ELs influence the writing they subsequently produce (Samway & Taylor, 1993).

Several instructional strategies hold promise for ELs in meeting the Writing Standards. Such strategies focus on developing what is called for by the Standards (e.g., writing different text types for different audiences and purposes and presenting knowledge gained through research) rather than ELs’ production of mechanically and grammatically “flawless” writing. Accordingly, writing instruction for ELs can do the following:

- Maximize the use of ELs’ existing linguistic and cultural resources by ensuring that students have meaningful ideas to write about (Manchón, 2011), allowing them to use their home languages or varieties of language during the writing process (Fu, 2009; Kibler, 2010; National Council of Teachers of English, 2012; Souryasack & Lee, 2007), employing
technology that students already use (Black, 2005; Smythe & Neufeld, 2010), and drawing upon their background knowledge, practices, and experiences (Langer, 1997; McGinnis, 2007; Trueba, Moll, Diaz & Diaz, 1984).

- Provide ELs with meaningful exposure to the types of texts they will be writing, guiding students through the linguistic and rhetorical patterns found in different genres. Such instruction can focus explicitly on the role of grammatical and lexical features in making meaning for different audiences and purposes (e.g., Achugar, Schleppegrell, & Oteíza, 2007; Aguirre-Muñoz, Park, Amabisca, & Boscardin, 2008; Gebhard, Harman, and Seger, 2007; Gebhard & Willett, 2008; Schleppegrell, 2004).

- Ensure that writing instruction creates meaningful opportunities to communicate about disciplinary texts and content rather than to complete mechanical text production exercises (Bunch, Lotan, Valdés, & Cohen, 2005; Valdés, 2001; Valdés & Sanders, 2006). These opportunities include interactions with peers and teachers about ELs’ writing and sensitive yet substantive feedback about the content of their writing at multiple points throughout the writing process.

- Include research projects that encourage students with strong literacy backgrounds in their home languages to draw upon this resource to help them locate, evaluate, and analyze information; assist students in selecting reading and drafting strategies appropriate for varied research tasks; provide explicit guidance on the conventions of textual ownership and citations in US academic settings, alongside clear yet critical explanations of the purposes these conventions serve; and create opportunities that allow ELs to learn research processes by participating in teacher-guided and collaborative endeavors before attempting research independently.
Speaking And Listening: Working Collaboratively, Understanding Multiple Perspectives, and Presenting Ideas

The Speaking and Listening Standards call upon students to listen critically and participate actively in cooperative tasks. They require students to build upon others’ ideas, articulate their own ideas, and confirm their understandings through informal, collaborative group interactions as well as formal presentations that integrate information from oral, visual, quantitative, and media sources for different audiences, tasks, purposes, and disciplines. The Standards also expect students to interpret information; explain how it contributes to target topics, texts, and issues; and “present claims and findings by sequencing ideas logically and using pertinent descriptions, facts, and details to accentuate main ideas or themes” (p. 49).

As with reading, the comprehension of oral language requires a number of interrelated knowledge sources, including schematic knowledge (factual, sociocultural, and discourse-related background information), contextual knowledge (physical settings, participants, and what has been/will be said), and systemic knowledge (semantics, syntax, and phonology) (Anderson & Lynch, 1988). Effective listening comprehension also requires the use of strategies such as focusing on relevant parts of a message, making predictions, and monitoring one’s own comprehension (see Anderson & Lynch, 1988; Goh, 2005, Vandergrift & Goh, 2012). Because comprehension rests on such a broad knowledge base and set of strategies relevant to a given situation, difficulties in spoken encounters between ELs and their interlocutors are not surprising: second language listening research has documented a range of lexical, grammatical, and conceptual causes of misunderstandings for non-native speakers in spoken interactions (Rost, 2002).
Students are also required to use interactional competence to participate in the social context of the classroom, negotiating, constructing, and sometimes resisting norms of interaction governing various typical classroom participation structures (Cazden, 1986, 2001; Mehan, 1979; Philips, 1972, 1983). Classrooms feature a number of different speech events, each of which is “directly governed by the rules or norms of the use of speech” (Hymes, 1972, p. 56). Even within a single speech event, norms can be quite complex. In classroom presentations, for example, students are often asked to manage the floor, either as individuals or as a group, while also being ready to respond to the teachers’ unpredictable interjections and directives at moment’s notice, as well as often engage with the student audience’s questions and comments after the delivery of information (Bunch, 2009). Meanwhile, students may be called upon to address different audiences simultaneously in a single presentation, addressing fellow classmates while knowing that the teacher is the audience who will ultimately be evaluating them. Some presentations additionally call for students to imagine that their audience knows nothing about the topic they are presenting on (even if this is not the case), or to engage in a role play in a contemporary or historical context (see Bunch, 2009). Engaging in whole-class discussions or group work involves different, but similarly complicated, rules of interaction and audience engagement.

For ELs to realize opportunities presented by the listening and speaking standards, teachers across the curriculum can support students by offering a wide variety of classroom discourse structures, many of which also hold promise for language development (see Gutiérrez, 1995; Hawkins, 2004; McGroarty, 1993; McGroarty & Calderón, 2005). Instruction can do the following:

- Engage students in individual, small group, and whole-class discussions that move beyond traditional initiation-response-evaluation structures (Mehan, 1979; Sinclair & Coulthard,
1975) to “bridging discourses” that encourage ELs to produce extended oral discourse and engage with academic registers (Gibbons, 2006; see also Wells, 1999; Valdés, 2004).

- Develop collaborative tasks that require effective and linguistically rich discussions (see Bunch, 2006, 2009; Bunch, Abram, Lotan, & Valdés, 2001; Bunch et al., 2005; McGroarty, 1993; McGroarty & Calderón, 2005).

- Allow ELs to collaborate in their home languages as they work on tasks to be completed in English (Anton & DeCamilla, 1998; Brooks & Donato, 1994; DeGuerrero & Villamil, 2000; Kibler, 2010; Swain & Lapkin, 2000).

- Teach ELs strategies for using their still-developing English language proficiency to engage in different communicative modes. These include the *interpersonal mode*, which requires moment-by-moment, unplanned interaction but affords the opportunity for immediate clarification of meaning; the *presentational mode*, which allows for planning but requires anticipating audiences’ needs; and the *interpretive mode*, which does not require production but does not generally allow for clarification of understanding (National Standards in Foreign Language Education Project, 1996).

- Include listening comprehension activities designed to help ELs to “arrive successfully at a reasonable interpretation of extended discourse,” rather than to process every word literally, which is impossible even for native English speakers (Brown & Yule, 1983, p. 57; see also Gibbons, 2002; Zwiers, 2008).

**Language: Using and Developing Linguistic Resources to Do All of the Above**

The Standards maintain that in order to be college and career ready, students need a “firm control over the conventions of standard English,” and that “they must come to appreciate that language is at least as much a matter of craft as of rules” (p. 51). According to the Standards,
students must be able to “choose words, syntax, and punctuation to express themselves to achieve particular functions and rhetorical effects.” It is important to understand that ELs, by definition, will use “imperfect” (i.e., non-native-like) English as they engage in these functions and achieve these effects. By focusing on language as it relates to communicative and academic endeavors, rather than merely as the acquisition of “good” English, teachers can help students develop and use grammatical structures, vocabulary, and written and oral conventions as resources for making meaning, for learning, and for communicating with an increasing number of audiences for an increasing number of purposes.

In the context of the expectations for all students articulated by the Standards, language instruction for ELs can no longer be envisioned as isolated from the context of meaningful and engaging academic work. Although the decontextualized teaching of discrete elements of a second language (e.g., verb tenses, grammatical structures, vocabulary) may be effective for inducing the use of those elements on restricted tasks and tests that highlight them, there is little evidence that such instruction is effective for fostering the use of those elements in wider communication (see Valdés et al., 2011). This is not to say that an explicit focus on language is unproductive, but rather that such a focus should occur in conjunction with, and in the service of, meaningful academic work across the curriculum (Gebhard, Harman, & Seger, 2007; Schleppegrell, 2004; Fang & Schleppegrell, 2008).

In supporting the development of ELs’ language, it is also important to keep in mind that all school-age children (barring either extreme impairment or severe early childhood abuse and isolation) already have the linguistic resources in at least one language to engage in a wide range of communicative settings. All students, regardless of their language or cultural background, speak one or more variety of a home language, and that variety is associated with students’
geographical background, racial and ethnic community, and identity affiliations; there are no speakers of any language without an “accent,” and, from a linguistic standpoint, there are no varieties of English (or any other language) that are superior to any other variety (see MacSwan, 2000; MacSwan, Rolstad, & Glass, 2002; Valdés et al., 2005).

All students, therefore, have first-hand knowledge of the conventions and the rhetorical craft of language as used in their own communities of practice (see Gutiérrez, Morales, & Martinez, 2009; Gutiérrez & Orellana, 2006; Orellana & Gutiérrez, 2006). In fact, children who are in the process of developing more than one language may have a heightened awareness of such functions and effects because they use two or more languages. At the same time, students’ linguistic backgrounds will be more or less closely aligned with the varieties of language privileged in school, and it is undoubtedly in the interest of ELs to expand their linguistic repertoires to include those varieties. In supporting students to do so, ELs’ incomplete acquisition of standard varieties of English should not be interpreted as students’ inability or unwillingness to participate in a wide range of language, literacy, and learning practices across the disciplines, including those called for by the Standards. Nor should such incomplete acquisition be used as a justification for removing students from the contexts in which they can engage with such practices. With appropriate supports, ELs’ participation in the key practices called for by the Standards—especially those highlighted in this paper—are exactly what is necessary for their further development of both language and literacy.

Conclusion

In this article, we have drawn on theory and research on language and literacy development first to highlight what must be considered in envisioning effective instruction broadly for ELs in the age of new standards and then to articulate specific recommendations for
realizing the conditions and support necessary for ELs to meet each of the domains of the ELA Standards. The general and more specific guidance can be united under the umbrella of “language as action” (van Lier & Walqui, 2012), a notion that has been proposed in second language studies to challenge the field’s historical proclivity to consider language as either form or function in isolation of that action. This stance is reflected in how we chose to address the ELA domains, focusing not on reading, writing, speaking, and listening as discrete language “skills” to be acquired, but rather on underlying practices highlighted by the Standards that are particularly related to one of the domains but ultimately involve the integration of all of them: engaging with complex texts to build knowledge across the curriculum; using evidence to analyze, inform, and argue; working collaboratively; understanding multiple perspectives; and presenting ideas. It follows that “language” itself, more than a discrete area of instruction or assessment, is best seen as the development of the resources to do everything else called for by the Standards. Such a perspective toward language use and development, of course, parallels in some ways the moves toward social conceptions of literacy and its development that have gained traction in literacy studies over the past several decades (see Hull & Moje, 2012).

We have also argued that considering effective and equitable education for ELs in the age of new common standards requires shared responsibility on multiple fronts. Certainly, classroom teachers will be the most important force in enacting a shift toward language and literacy as action for ELs. One of the most immediate needs, therefore, will be for teachers with different areas of expertise—English language arts, ELD/ESL, and the other disciplines (e.g. mathematics, the sciences, social studies)—to collaborate in as many ways as possible. But the “shared responsibility” for preparing ELs for the language and literacy called for by the Standards rests not only with teachers across the disciplines, but also with curriculum developers, textbook
writers, assessment specialists, teacher educators, administrators, counselors, and policymakers. For example, because ELs’ development of the ability to read complex texts and engage in academic conversations requires access to such texts and conversations, along with support in engaging with them, school administrators, counselors, and teachers will need to work together to plan instructional settings that allow for such access and support. Teacher educators will need to explore ways to help teachers, both ELD specialists and mainstream classroom teachers, recognize what students can do with developing proficiency in English, challenging what they may have previously thought it means to “teach” a second language. Assessment specialists will need to unpack existing or proposed English language proficiency standards and analyze their correspondence to the language demands of the Common Core Standards and Next Generation Science Standards to ensure that ELs not only have their language needs met but that they are adequately prepared to graduate from high school ready for college and a wide range of careers. And policymakers will be faced with the challenging task of incentivizing conditions that simultaneously maintain high expectations for ELs and recognize the challenges inherent for students in engaging in instructional settings in a language they are still in the process of developing.

It is essential that all of these efforts are made in conjunction with the best possible research and theory on language, literacy, and their development—which leads to considering the responsibility of the broad language and literacy research community. We argue that researchers will need to continue to direct their research efforts in ways that contribute toward a better understanding of effective Standards-based instruction and the nature of language and language development, especially for school-aged children from linguistically diverse backgrounds, an area that has been woefully under-studied (Valdés et al., 2011). In these efforts,
researchers in both “language” and “literacy” fields must actively cross disciplinary boundaries to engage with each other in collaborative scholarly inquiry that capitalizes on the synergy of shared expertise in both language and literacy traditions, focusing especially on issues related to ELs (for examples of efforts to integrate insights from literacy and second language studies, see Gutierrez & Orellana, 2006; Hawkins, 2004; Orellana & Gutierrez; Hull & Moje, 2012.) And perhaps most importantly, researchers need to undertake significant and substantive engagement with educational stakeholders outside the research community to ensure that research is relevant to the needs of educators and works to inform policy in the common core era. We see the composing of this article as one such effort.

The excerpt quoted at the beginning of this article is taken from a longer introduction to the ELA and discipline literacy standards, in which the authors argue that the Standards “lay out a vision of what it means to be a literate person in the twenty-first century” (p. 3). As discussion and debate appropriately unfold regarding the nature of that vision, and as plans for how to implement the Standards proceed on multiple levels, from designing classroom instruction to the development of large-scale assessments, it is imperative that a focus on ELs be included in both the vision and the implementation efforts. Focusing on the challenges and affordances facing ELs in light of the new standards is obviously important in its own right, given the significant and growing population that will be called upon to meet the standards in a language they are still developing. But such efforts can also contribute to rethinking the role of language and literacy in instruction more generally; conditions conducive for the development of language, literacy, and learning for all students; and the kinds of supports that might be helpful for students from a wide variety of linguistic backgrounds. Although ELs are arguably in most need of the kinds of approaches proposed in this article—and we have focused explicitly on this population
throughout the conceptualization and explication of the ideas put forth here—there are insights discussed here that are both derived from and applicable to the education of other students as well. In fact, as some have recently argued (e.g. Enright, 2011; Galguera, 2011), educational practitioners as well as researchers may be well served by thinking more in terms of the linguistic diversity inherent in the student population at large, and the language demands inherent in the academic instruction they encounter, rather than solely on discrete classifications such as “English Learner.” In short, our hope is that this article can make a contribution toward envisioning what role each of us—individually and collectively—might play in realizing the opportunities potentially afforded by the Standards to all students as they work toward developing multiple resources to engage in the “creative and purposeful expression in language” (ELA Standards, p. 3) that will serve them in school and beyond.
The development of literacies (Hull & Moje, 2012) within any subject in the school curriculum involves learning to control new ideas and skills, to express new ideas through language, and to communicate in ways that are contextually appropriate. School-based language is often subject-specific, and it involves concise and precise ways of expressing complex ideas and concepts that are embedded in the content of a subject, and that are essential for learning in that subject. If this is true when the medium of instruction is in one of students’ home languages, then it is especially important to consider its implications in the education of second language learners.

How do ELLs learn to participate effectively in school-based language and literacy practices? Literacies are learned through participation in activities that both challenge and support participants, in what is conceptualized in sociocultural theory as “apprenticeship” (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). In other words, students need to perceive that the invitation to engage in learning will result in their benefit; that it is legitimate, treating them as worthwhile participants with something to contribute to the exchange; that it is well supported instructionally; and that approximations to accomplished models are accepted as promising attempts on the road to skillful understandings and performances. This means that apprenticeship always takes place in social contexts, where the relationship among participants is as important as the activities in which they are engaged. Jerome Bruner (1996) once observed that students do not only learn about, they also learn to be; the roles being developed in the classroom context in which academic activity takes place both shape and are shaped by the participants in it.
Consequently, the invitations students receive to participate, the nature of the proposed participation, and the availability of contextual supports are all are decisive in their impact on students’ development.

Drawing upon the previous section of this manuscript, we provide examples of what instruction that meets new demands in the Common Core might look like in practice. In order to do so, we draw from a middle school English language arts unit focused on persuasive texts, *Persuasion Across Time and Space: Reading and Producing Complex Text*, created to exemplify pedagogical arrangements that realize the academic potential of English language learners in Common Core Standards-based ELA lessons. The unit is currently being piloted in three large urban school districts across the US. Written for students who have reached at least an intermediate level of proficiency in English, and their “mainstream” classmates, the unit is composed of five conceptually linked lessons to be taught over approximately five to six weeks in a 50-minute class. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the curriculum is spiraled, in that students develop and deepen their understanding of persuasive rhetoric as they move from more familiar forms of persuasion (advertising) to more complex and historically situated forms (the “Gettysburg Address,” Martin Luther King, Jr.’s “I Have a Dream,” and other speeches supporting or opposing key aspects of the Civil Rights Movement agenda). Lessons provide multiple opportunities to develop and refine students’ understanding of genre, introducing progressively more complex tasks that build upon principles of persuasion previously learned in the unit. In this sense, lessons are closely linked rather than “stand alone” sets of activities.

The four main features of the unit discussed below signal important reconceptualizations found in the unit that are necessary for the design and enactment of learning opportunities for
second language learners if we want them to develop sophisticated literacies for life in school and beyond.

Reconceptualiation #1. Away from a conceptualization of language acquisition as an individual process, toward an understanding of language acquisition as a social process of apprenticeship that takes place in social contexts.

We take the position that language learning is not solely the accomplishment of individual students, but is fundamentally a socially constructed process of apprenticeship where interaction is (and becomes) the engine that drives development. In this respect teachers have the responsibility for planning robust and flexible invitations for students to engage in apprenticeship with others through tasks that have multiple entry points and derive benefit—albeit differentially—for all (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). The five lessons in the unit exemplar unit contain multiple opportunities for students to work in dyads, or groups of three or four in carefully constructed invitations to engage in language and literacy practices. This social engagement develops their conceptual, academic, and pragmatic competence and the language required to enact them.

For example, during the second lesson in the unit as students prepare for reading the “Gettysburg Address,” they engage in a social, multi-faceted reading process that simultaneously builds content knowledge by historically contextualizing the American Civil War and encourages use of metacognitive skills to support the reading of complex texts. The task is structured as a jigsaw project, in which each member of a three-person “base group” joins a different “expert group” to develop knowledge on a different aspect of the war. In their expert groups, students subdivide in dyads to take turns reading aloud a short, three- to five-paragraph text. Students take turns reading paragraphs aloud and, at the end of their designated paragraphs,
use a Clarifying Bookmark (Walqui, 2007) to talk with their partner and monitor their understanding of the text (See Figure 2). With short texts – no longer than four paragraphs – reading of the entire text is done aloud to provide students with peer opportunities to practice the Bookmark strategy, but with longer texts, the strategy would be employed only with selected paragraphs that lend themselves to the given metacognitive strategies being practiced.

In reading texts beyond their comprehension level, students engaging in the Clarifying Bookmark activity are required to slow down their reading and, in conjunction with peers, consciously apply strategies to make sense of the text, focusing on what they understand, how they understand it, what they do not understand, and what they can do about it. Over time, students appropriate this conscious and effortful focus on strategies and their relevant application, automatically using these skills in individual reading until they encounter a text that is complex beyond their ability to understand. At this point students are once again able to employ the conscious process of focusing on textual meaning-making through strategies they have learned.

Figure 2 shows three Clarifying Bookmarks used in this unit. The left hand side of the cards list six strategies students may apply to metacognitively address their source of difficulty. To the right of each metacognitive strategy are three formulaic expressions (Ellis, 2005) that can help ELLs begin to articulate their attempts at meaning-making. Several elements of support for ELLs in this task are notable. First, the activity begins in a social, peer-supported structure that requires students to engage in metacognitive and content-related knowledge building before asking students to read and employ the strategy individually. Further, students are given choice as to “What you can say,” in that multiple examples of classroom registers of language appropriate for the task are provided. Finally, introduction to these metacognitive strategies is gradual. In the chart above you observe a subdivision into three bookmarks: What this signals is
that two strategies are introduced to students first, and they are practiced until students appropriate them. At that point, two more strategies are added, and students have a choice among four options. When, after several applications, the teacher has observed that all students can make the appropriate choice among four plans of attack, the final two are added. Eventually students have a choice of six strategies that they can use autonomously as they read and make sense of complex text.

Reconceptualiation #2. Away from a conceptualization of pedagogical activities as “help” provided to students geared mainly to “get the job done,” toward activities that scaffold students’ development and increasing autonomy.

Introduction of the new Standards has triggered quite a bit of discussion around educators’ understanding of the concept of scaffolding. For some the term refers to any help the teacher provides so as to enable students to complete activities. Others have argued, ‘No more scaffolding for students, especially for English language learners: They have been overscaffolded.’ Both responses communicate misunderstandings of the term. Coined by Bruner and Sherwood (1976), and based on Vygotsky’s seminal ideas of activity in the “zone of proximal development,” scaffolding is a metaphor that refers to the “just right” kind of support that teachers design for students in order to move them beyond their current state of development and make their knowledge generative, so that it can be used by students appropriately to support new learning. Scaffolding is always contingent, responsive, predicated on observations of students’ level of maturation, and based on teachers’ knowledge of the assistance required in order to realize students’ potential. Just like physical scaffolds on buildings, pedagogical ones “should be constantly changed, dismantled, extended, and adapted in accordance with the needs of the workers. In themselves they have no value” (Walqui & van Lier, 2010). While scaffolding
begins where the student currently is, it both builds and accelerates development. As the following quote reminds us:

[Scaffolding] is not just any assistance which helps a learner accomplish a task. It is help which will enable a learner to accomplish a task which they would not have been quite able to manage on their own, and it is help which is intended to bring the learner closer to a state of competence which will enable them to complete such a task on their own (Maybin, Mercer, & Steirer, 1992, p. 188).

Two essential aspects of scaffolding are intimately related: structure and process. Structure refers to the organization of the activity students are asked to participate in, how it begins, what is required to work through it, and how it culminates. However, the structure is there only to make the process possible. Without the Clarifying Bookmark, for example, there would be no organized way of supporting students in interactions around complex text.

Scaffolding is also forward-looking. A key characteristic of scaffolding is intellectual push with concomitant support, which eventually leads to a process of handover/takeover. Teachers’ observations of students’ participation allow them to plan instructional next steps that enable students to assume increasing responsibility for supporting themselves. The Clarifying Bookmark, for example, has three levels of handover: Once the first two strategies are appropriated by students, two more are added with instructional support until they are appropriated, and so it continues with the other two.

Both initial scaffolding and the handover/takeover process require thoughtful planning and in-the-moment adaptation, what Hammond and Gibbons (2007) call “designed-in” and “contingent” scaffolding, respectively. Designed-in scaffolding refers to the planned assistance teachers deliberately construct as they select, sequence, and consider the activities that will
support their lessons. These planned features, they explain, “are an essential pre-requisite for creating a learning context where contingent scaffolding becomes possible. Without these designed-in features, contingent scaffolding may become a hit and miss affair that contributes little to learning goals of lessons or units of work” (p. 10). As scaffolded activities are enacted in practice, and teachers observe interactions, then other supports are provided or removed as needed.

In addition to the thematically and conceptually linked and spiraling unit curriculum, teachers are provided multiple pathways for differentiating instruction so that all students can achieve at high levels. The unit as a whole, and each lesson individually, includes apprenticeship experiences in which students have multiple levels of support designed to foster increasing levels of autonomy over time. Within each lesson, learning activities or tasks are carefully sequenced within and across the three-part lesson architecture (Walqui, 2007; see Figure 3) that prepares students to engage with texts, guides them in interacting with texts, and then helps them extend their understanding, all in order to develop English language learners’ understanding and application of the literacies described in the CCSS English Language Arts Standards targeted in the unit.

Throughout the unit, options for minimal, moderate, and maximal levels of scaffolding are also described for each lesson task. The nature of this scaffolding, however, deserves further discussion. Differentiation is a term that has gained unwarranted currency in the current educational environment. As practiced in many schools, at best it means providing different sets of students with the specific supports that will allow them to be successful at the same goals although in differential types of performances. At worst it means offering different kinds of challenges and supports to different kinds of students. This, of course, can perpetuate academic
and linguistic divides. The best way to approach the topic of differentiation, in our minds, is to think of it as the right kind of support offered students in a class so that they all accomplish the same goals. This entails inviting all students to engage in the same activity and contribute equally to the accomplishment of a common goal, although scaffolded differentially. In this sense, each student’s contribution is equally important to the accomplishment of the joint task.

In a previous example, we discussed that the jigsaw project that prepared students to read the “Gettysburg Address” provided them with group-based opportunities to develop different parts of equally important information necessary to prepare them to comprehend Lincoln’s complex text. What is clear from this activity is that all contributions are equally important so that the base group, composed of three students, can be prepared to read the speech with maximum understanding. Although each piece is essential for this preparation, text 1 (“The Biography of Abraham Lincoln”) is one and a half pages long, text 2 (“The Civil War”) is one page long, and that text 3 (“The Battle of Gettysburg”), is also one page long, although shorter than text 2. This is where differentiation takes place. A teacher is asked to divide his or her students into three numerically equal groups of students: those who know the most English and read more or less efficiently, those who speak a bit less English and have a bit more trouble reading in English, and those who speak the least English and need the most support in reading. Although students will read texts of different lengths, being able to provide key information about each text at the end of the activity is essential for all students to be ready to jointly face Lincoln’s speech. This means that there is a pre-established focus for each group, and each group knows at the onset of the task what counts as successful completion of their reading, both for their group and for the class as whole. Furthermore, because they are grouped in teams and
working hard at completing their tasks, teachers can support them differentially—scaffold contingently—as needed.

Reconceptualiation #3. From the use of simple or simplified texts to work with complex, amplified texts.

After the first few weeks of rigorous and accelerated introduction to English, even students at early levels of English proficiency should have opportunities to engage with authentic texts that represent various elements of complexity, rather than only having access to simple or simplified texts. However, complex texts are not accessible on their own: They need to be amplified through processes of scaffolding. The scaffolding can be embedded in the text, or added to it.

Earlier, we pointed out that texts can be complex on a variety of dimensions, both linguistic (in terms of the complexity of a texts grammatical features and the demands that its vocabulary represents) as well as in other ways, such as how many levels of meaning are implied, how conventionally the structure of texts represent particular genres, and whether, even if conventional, those genres are familiar to students. In working with students to become proficient in reading complex texts, it is important to keep in mind that students can be challenged to focus on particular aspects of text complexity while being provided support that lightens the load on other aspects. Similarly, text complexity can be initially explored with students using modalities that might be more accessible to ELLs, especially at the earlier levels of proficiency. For example, in Lesson 1 of the unit, students are asked to review advertisements and their slogans, and to categorize them as “soft” or “hard” sells indicating what language and visual cues prompted their responses. Building on their intuitive observations, they are then lead through a systematization of their knowledge of the use of modality in English, learning typical
language and modal verbs used in soft, medium, and hard sells. After this they create their own advertisements and explain the type of sell they intend. The concept, introduced initially in Lesson 1, is spiraled and made deeper and more complex through the subsequent lessons.

An example of scaffolding embedded in texts comes when, after having read background information on the Civil War, discussed key words and ideas found in the “Gettysburg Address” using a Wordle (http://www.wordle.net/), and heard the text read aloud twice by the teacher, with teacher explanations of language and details of the speech as needed, students then answer the kind of “text-dependent” questions requiring “close reading” that have been advocated for as a strategy associated with the Common Core Standards (see Brown & Kappes, 2012). Note that students are asked to engage in such activities only after they have had ample opportunities to activate and build background knowledge. Scaffolding is then extended to support deeper levels of analysis as students are asked to read the text in “Four Voices.” For that purpose, unit designers divided the text into “chunks” of language that represented small yet coherent pieces of information, as seen in the first sentence of the “Gettysburg Address,” in which chunks alternate in four different fonts (plain, bold, underlined, and italics):

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

The entire text of the speech in four voices can be found in Figure 4.

In this activity, each student in a group of four is asked to read aloud phrases in their assigned font, and groups read the text two times or more as necessary to make sense of meaning and intonation. Teachers make it clear to students beforehand that many times as they listen to English, they are bound not to understand parts of a text. The advice follows that they should not
give up if they do not understand one piece but instead should focus on comprehending the next part of the text. Without this explicit advice, ELLs often become frustrated and stop trying to attend to meaning. Even if this pause is only momentary, by the time they focus on the text again, the damage is irreparable. If instead they learn to tell themselves that if they do not understand something in the text, they should focus on the next chunk, or the one after it, they will begin to develop two habits that make good second language learners: they will tolerate ambiguity, and they will learn to make educated guesses and become “willing and accurate guessers,” as Rubin (1975) pointed out several decades ago. Both the materials and the instructions provided for teachers in this unit encourage these characteristics, both in helping students see examples of the ways in which texts can be meaningfully chunked into smaller parts and in encouraging students to develop effective comprehension strategies that allow them to gain meaning from complex texts.

This unit exemplar (available at http://ell.stanford.edu/teaching_resources/ela) attempts to provide guidance to teachers, teacher educators, and curriculum developers of the reconceptualizations that will need to take place in the education of ELLs so as to realize their potential in the Common Core era. The development of second languages is a complex process, in which students develop along unique paths and trajectories because they all start at different points and because the scaffolds provided them work in different ways at the individual level of impact. Nonetheless, it is important to know that given appropriate pedagogical supports, all students will advance, and that the students who have the most to grow will do so in accelerated ways.
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UNIT
Persuasion Across Time and Space: Analyzing and Producing Persuasive Texts

LESSON 1
Advertising in the Contemporary World: An Introduction to Persuasive Texts
Analyzing message, tone, mood, and modality in multimodal texts

LESSON 2
Persuasion in Historical Context: The Gettysburg Address
Building background knowledge for reading; analyzing the development of central ideas at the macro and micro levels

LESSON 3
Ethos, Logos, & Pathos in Civil Rights Movement Speeches
Critical analysis of the use of Aristotle’s appeals in persuasive speeches

LESSON 4
Persuasion as Text: Organizational, Grammatical, and Lexical Moves in Barbara Jordan’s All Together Now
Comparing and contrasting macro and micro level textual choices in speeches

LESSON 5
Putting it Together: Analyzing and Producing Persuasive Text
Independent analysis of a speech and writing of a persuasive essay

Figure 1: Spiraled Unit Design
Handout #5: Clarifying Bookmark

Clarifying Bookmark 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I can do</th>
<th>What I can say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to think about what the selected text may mean.</td>
<td>I'm not sure what this is about, but I think it may mean...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This part is tricky, but I think it means...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>After rereading this part, I think it may mean...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to summarize my understanding so far.</td>
<td>What I understand about this reading so far is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I can summarize this part by saying...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The main points of this section are...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clarifying Bookmark 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I can do</th>
<th>What I can say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to use my prior knowledge to help me understand.</td>
<td>I know something about this from...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have read or heard about this when...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I don't understand the section, but I do recognize...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to apply related concepts and/or readings.</td>
<td>One reading/idea I have encountered before that relates to this is...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We learned about this idea/concept when we studied...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This concept/idea is related to...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clarifying Bookmark 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I can do</th>
<th>What I can say</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I am going to ask questions about ideas and phrases I don't understand.</td>
<td>Two questions I have about this section are...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I understand this part, but I have a question about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I have a question about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I am going to use related text, pictures, tables, and graphs to help me understand unclear ideas.</td>
<td>If we look at this graphic, it shows...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The table gives me more information about...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When I scanned the earlier part of the chapter, I found...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2: Clarifying Bookmark
Figure 3: Three-part lesson architecture (Walqui, 2007)
Handout #10: The Gettysburg Address in Four Voices

Directions: Each student chooses one of four fonts (regular font, bold font, underlined font, or italics); when it is your turn to read aloud, you will read your font only.

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

Now we are engaged in a great civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceived and so dedicated, can long endure. We are met on a great battlefield of that war. We have come to dedicate a portion of that field, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives that that nation might live. It is altogether fitting and proper that we should do this.

But, in a larger sense, we cannot dedicate — we cannot consecrate — we cannot hallow — this ground. The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it, far above our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be dedicated here to the unfinished work which they who fought here have thus far so nobly advanced. It is rather for us to be here dedicated to the great task remaining before us—that from these honored dead we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last full measure of devotion—that we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain—that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom—and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

Figure 4: Four Voices