

KATHLEEN A.J. MOHR
ERIC S. MOHR

Extending English-language learners' classroom interactions using the Response Protocol

The Response Protocol is one way to support teachers' efforts to increase engagement among ELLs in classroom discourse.

In order to be proficient and productive students, English-language learners (ELLs) need many opportunities to interact in social and academic situations. Effective teachers encourage their students' participation in classroom discussions, welcome their contributions, and motivate them by such practices (Cazden, 2001; Stipek, 2002). However, many educators often allow their less proficient students to remain silent or to participate less than their English-fluent peers (Laosa, 1977; Penfield, 1987; Schinke-Llano, 1983; Wilhelm, Contreras, & Mohr, 2004). I (Mohr, first author) recently participated in a study focusing on how mainstream classroom teachers helped Spanish-speaking immigrant students become successful at school. During the observations, I noticed that the teachers missed many opportunities to help ELLs communicate in class, allowing them to be less involved in oral interactions.

A byproduct of that study was the analysis presented in this article. We considered what classroom teachers could do to more fully engage ELLs in teacher-student interactions, especially during teacher-led question-and-answer sequences. Essentially, teachers can elicit more from the less proficient or reticent students if they consider various response options and then enlarge their response

repertoires in order to encourage students' participation and help develop their language proficiencies.

There are several reasons why ELLs may struggle to respond appropriately to teachers' prompts and questions. Certainly, not all teacher questions are clearly understood by students, and, if such is the case, teachers should rephrase or clarify queries in order to facilitate student comprehension. Teachers may also not wait long enough for students to consider a question and formulate a response (Nystrand, Gamoran, Kachure, & Prendergast, 1997; Rowe, 1974). In addition, while first-language learning is largely motivated by a child's intrinsic desire to socialize, second-language learning often needs more extrinsic influence (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983). Wong Fillmore's (1991) model of second-language learning identified three motivational components that contribute to student progress: interest from the learners, proficient speakers who support and interact with the learners, and an environment that supports relationships between learners and proficient speakers. Students may not wish to participate if the teacher expects them simply to recite low-level knowledge or if the teacher sets low expectations for the students. Clarity, wait time, higher order thinking, and higher expectations are factors that influence the quality of teacher interactions with all students, but some factors pertain more specifically to the participation of ELLs.

Immigrant students may come from cultures that do not expect students to ask or answer questions during classroom discussions. These students often perceive the teacher to have elevated status and think that, as students, they should respectfully listen—rather than talk—in the company of their

teachers. Because U.S. classrooms are often less formal (e.g., teachers sitting on the floor, students working in groups) than their previous educational environments, immigrant students sometimes take a while to adapt to the typical question–answer sequence that is common there. In addition, language-acquisition theory hypothesizes that language learners experience an initial silent period, which is time spent receiving the language as input, prior to developing language-production skills (Krashen & Terrell, 1983; Saviile-Troike, 1988). Some teachers are aware of these stages and respect the language-acquisition process by not calling on their ELLs. In order to not embarrass or intimidate their ELL students, however, teachers sometimes continue to give dispensations when it comes to responding in class. I have observed that many students new to U.S. culture and its educational system, and students who are timid or reluctant for any reason, often do not participate readily in class discussions and thereby assume a more passive role in classroom interactions.

Typical classrooms

While classroom discourse events vary, research has indicated that teacher talk dominates classroom communication. Edwards and Mercer (1987) documented that teachers perform 76% of classroom talk. Ramirez, Yuen, Ramey, and Merino (1986) categorized teacher talk as consisting of explanations, questions, commands, modeling, and feedback. Other studies of teacher discourse in primary grades indicated that teacher talk is often managerial rather than conversational in nature (e.g., Cummins, 1994). Forestal (1990) noted that 60% of teacher talk involved asking questions, primarily display questions, which expect students to recall information taught previously by the teacher. In one study of effective primary teachers of literacy, Mohr (1998) tallied the number of questions asked by the teachers in the study at almost 100 per hour. Therefore, the preponderance of teacher talk and the teacher's use of questions continue as factors in how much classroom talk time is shared with students; both the quantity and quality of such interactions deserve scrutiny. For example, there are differences between direct and indirect instruction; the nature of large-group discussion requires more guidance

from the teacher than do small-group interactions (Johnston, 2004), and English-language learners may need different support in their communication efforts than do fluent English speakers. Thus, aspects of teacher-led discussions and discourse patterns warrant our continued attention.

Asking and answering questions are typical interactions and are expected in most classrooms (Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). A very common exchange is referred to as the Initiation-Response-Evaluation (IRE) sequence (Mehan, 1979), similar to what Tharp and Gallimore (1988) termed “recitation questioning.” However, the IRE routine may not often be supportive of ELLs because it is a convergent process of seeking one right answer. ELLs may not be able to verbalize that answer in a teacher-expected manner (Fitzgerald, 1993; Jiménez, García, & Pearson, 1996). Wells and Chang-Wells (1992) recommended that the third component of such exchanges be feedback, rather than evaluation, so that the teacher does more than praise or evaluate the student's response. Such feedback can achieve a variety of goals—it can clarify, connect, and elaborate the verbal interactions between teachers and students and among students themselves.

Cazden (2001) differentiated teachers' display questions from exploratory queries. Display questions have specific and generally agreed-upon answers, while exploratory talk is speaking “without the answers fully intact” (p. 170). Display queries function to confirm the teacher's instruction, while the latter is more confirming of students as they exercise self-expression and refine their thinking. As Cazden also noted, “If the potentialities of classroom discourse, in which students talk more and in more varied ways, are significant for all students, then we have to pay careful attention to who speaks and who receives thoughtful responses” (p. 5).

Another well-recognized discourse structure is the “instructional conversation” (Goldenberg, 1993; Perez, 1996; Stipek, 2002; Williams, 2001). Goldenberg characterized an instructional conversation as excellent discussion that is interesting, engaging, relevant to students, and discernible throughout and that has a high level of participation that builds upon, challenges, extends, and varies the roles of the participants (teacher and students). One key role of the teacher in instructional conversations is what Perez called conversational uptakes, connective comments that respect the student

and afford linguistic scaffolds that foster more and better discussion of academic topics. As Reyes, Scribner, and Scribner (1999) pointed out, “teachers who apply the concept of instructional conversations embrace the philosophy that talking and thinking go together, and assume that the student may have something to say beyond what the student’s teacher or peer is thinking or already knows” (p. 202). English-language learners may not have sufficient English to readily express complex ideas, so teachers must respond in ways that facilitate ELLs’ efforts to share their thinking and contribute their voices to classroom communication.

In academic settings, both question–answer and conversational formats entail the use of academic language. Even students who are conversationally proficient need exposure to and practice with academic language in order to function successfully at school (Díaz-Rico, 2004; Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001). This important aspect of school success is also known as cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Academic language or CALP in English-speaking classrooms is characterized by Latinate vocabulary; subordinate grammatical constructions (e.g., participial phrases, dependent clauses); less reliance on temporal currency (discussing generalizations, rather than specific events); and rhetorical and cohesive devices, such as conjunctions and figurative language (Wong Fillmore, 2002). These linguistic competencies can be greatly enhanced by wide reading but are generally not learned apart from schooling processes. It is the teacher’s responsibility, then, to model and support students’ use of both conversational and academic language structures because these are not parallel processes.

While students’ command of conversational fluency is more readily accomplished, proficiency in academic language appears to take five to seven years (Collier, 1989; Cummins, 1981). Academic language is certainly more than vocabulary acquisition. Competence in academic English certainly cannot be accomplished without exposure to and practice with the vocabulary and the structures that characterize the language of school. The teacher can model academic language functions, such as seeking information, comparing, problem solving, and evaluating, and then use classroom interactions to guide students’ use of academic talk. The opportunity to speak academic language before us-

ing it in written work is important for English-language learners. It should not be assumed that being able to understand academic language as input is equal to being able to produce it. Teachers can provide the support that students need to acquire this more formal register via their own modeling or think-alouds (Gibbons, 2002; Weber & Longhi-Chirlin, 2001) and then foster the use of similar structures via interactive discussions, allowing students to use academic language in context.

Recommended practice

Currently, there is strong support for socially constructed learning, which is based on Vygotsky’s theory of sociocultural learning (1978). Vygotsky’s work, as interpreted by educators, fosters students’ construction of knowledge, rather than simple acceptance or reception of transferred information. Accordingly, the teacher serves as a mediator, using language to support and scaffold student learning within a social relationship. An essential tenet of Vygotsky’s theory is that who we are and how we think are functions of the social interactions in which we participate (Díaz & Flores, 2001). As García (2001) put it, “teaching, in this theoretical view, is perceived as assisted performance.... Learning is performance achieved through assistance” (p. 232). If learning is assisted or well scaffolded (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), students can accomplish tasks and achieve learning that they would not be able to do on their own. Thus, according to this theory, the role of the teacher is integral to student learning. It is the teacher who facilitates the active transformation of knowledge—or what Cazden (2001) referred to as appropriation—and who supports the students’ construction of new skills and competencies.

An important distinction made by Cazden (2001) is that teachers are responsible for both the affective and academic aspects of effective classrooms and classroom talk. Teachers can direct classroom discourse so that both these goals are targeted and supported. For example, teachers can accept, deny, recast, expand, or encourage elaboration of students’ responses. “Success for students in culturally diverse classrooms depends on the degree to which there are strategies that encourage all

students to talk and work together” (DeVillar & Faltis, 1991). One strategy (among many) promoted by Echevarria and Graves (2003) is the use of direct, rather than indirect, questions to promote clarity. So while instructional talk should be engaging, there is a place to use direct questions of students and then facilitate the elaboration of their responses as a means to develop academic language use and motivate them as learners.

For ELLs especially, the teacher serves as a conduit for sharing information and scaffolding social and academic language. Low levels of instruction and low-quality interactions often combine to yield poor academic achievement among students who are busy constructing the meaning of the language and the content of school. Rich language interactions, however, encourage thinking, social relationships, and expanded language use. As Johnston (2004) admonished, we “have to think more carefully about the language we use to offer our students the best learning environments we can” (p. 1).

Causes for concern

During the recent research project mentioned earlier, I (Mohr, first author) made regular observations of immigrant students newly admitted to a public elementary school (Mohr, 2004). One salient finding of the study of the immigrant students’ first year in the school district was the minimal time they spent talking, either in whole-class or small-group formats. The teachers, although well intended and courteous to ELLs, were reluctant to engage the newcomers in classroom discussion (Mohr; Wilhelm et al., 2004). The limited oral interaction for these immigrants was addressed in subsequent teacher interviews, and the teachers claimed that they were allowing an extended silent period (of nearly 10 months at the point of the study) to the new students—letting them get comfortable. To observers, however, the students seemed neglected. Perhaps the teachers were affected by the presence of the researchers, but the teachers were aware that the focus of the study was on the social and academic adjustment of the new immigrant students, so it was more likely that the teachers paid as much or more attention to these students during the observations than they did otherwise. The lack of teacher-supported discourse

among the students served as the impetus for further research and this current discussion.

The results of the aforementioned study were not atypical. ELLs are often less engaged and less vocal in class, posing a challenge for teachers, especially less experienced ones (Laosa, 1977; Penfield, 1987; Schinke-Llano, 1983). Novice teachers often ask low-level questions to quickly get to a simple, right answer. However, more effort on the part of the teacher to challenge students with open-ended and exploratory questions can yield richer instructional communications.

During the aforementioned study, the observers realized that the teachers were not making use of the variety of communication options available to them. To maximize instructional interactions, teachers should consider various response options and enlarge their repertoires to encourage students’ participation in socially constructed learning. For example, one aspect of teacher-supported interaction is how to handle students’ silence. Language learners certainly can understand more than they can produce, especially at the beginning stages. Therefore, just because students do not speak out does not mean that they do not comprehend the discussion or have something to contribute.

Teachers should assume that, like an iceberg that shows only a small percentage of its mass above the water, students have a great deal of competence that is not yet evident. Put simply, “teachers and researchers need to be careful not to interpret silence or one-word answers as lack of knowledge” (Cazden, 2001, p. 86). This might be particularly true among learners who have not consistently been held to high expectations. In an interesting study of working class boys, Brown and her colleagues (as cited in Cazden, 2001) determined that working class boys needed twice as many prompts as middle class children to elicit the same knowledge base. This indicates that teachers might have to be persistent in their efforts to engage students in classroom talk, especially those whose language and cultural backgrounds differ from that of the teacher.

Enlarging the teacher’s repertoire

Anticipating possible language difficulties should lead to appropriate scaffolding, not lowered

expectations for student performance. Therefore, teachers should diligently seek to engage ELLs in classroom talk. ELLs should be expected to participate, and when they do their responses could fall into one or more of the following six categories: an appropriate or correct response; a partially correct response; an incorrect or inappropriate response; a response in their native language, rather than in English; another question; or no response. What should teachers do in response to these possibilities? How can they prepare to address these opportunities to support students' learning? The following Response Protocol is designed to help teachers better their understanding of students' language development and broaden their repertoires for meeting the needs of this special population. (All names used in the samples are pseudonyms.)

Responses that are correct

If a student responds with a suitable answer to a teacher-generated question, the teacher may be gratified by the student's confirmation of the teaching-learning process. Most teachers praise students for correct responses. However, if the question-answer sequence attends to low-level thinking processes (e.g., recall, yes or no items, confirmational queries), teachers can make appropriate use of praise (Brophy, 1981), but they should also encourage students to elaborate their responses. ELLs know more than they might readily speak of, so even when giving an appropriate response, they should be encouraged to tell more, to explain their answers, or to elaborate their responses (see Table 1). Another element to add to appropriate responses is a confirmation that the student's use of

English is effective. Even if uttered in nonstandard English, if the message is comprehensible and evidences the student's understanding, commenting about the correctness and comprehensibility of the English should serve to encourage participation and elaboration on the part of the student.

For example, once during a shared reading about reptiles with a small group of English-language learners, a boy named Jorge was very interested in the section on turtles. He excitedly responded to the teacher's open-ended question, "What do you know about turtles?"

- Jorge: Turtles can go.
 Teacher: Yes, turtles can go, but where and how?
 Jorge: Turtles go maybe fast over.
 Teacher: Jorge, tell me more about how turtles go?
 Jorge: A turtle go over the road to be safe. I know because I saw it.
 Teacher: Yes, Jorge, turtles sometimes cross over the road. I have also seen turtles cross a road, and I am glad when they make it all the way across, aren't you?
 Jorge: Yeah, go, go turtles!

Responses that are partially correct

If a student provides even a partially correct response, the teacher can value the contribution, reinforce the correct portion, and then attempt to refine the response (see Table 2). Students have prior knowledge of the world that they make use of at school, as Jorge did in the previous example. However, sometimes their prior knowledge is limited and they need help to accommodate new learning into their schemata. Partially correct responses provide an excellent opportunity to hone students'

TABLE 1
Examples of teacher elaborations
of correct responses

- "You're right! Can you tell me more?"
- "Yes, that's good. What else do you know about that?"
- "You are correct. How did you learn that?"
- "Yes, that's a very good answer. Can you also tell me why this (concept, information) is important?"
- "I like that good thinking, and I like the way you said that." (Perhaps repeat the answer.)
- "Good thinking! Good English!"

TABLE 2
Examples of teacher elaborations
of partially correct responses

- "Thank you. Could you tell me more about that?"
- "Yes, I agree that _____. Now, let's think more about _____."
- "You're telling me some good things, especially the part about _____. What else?"
- "We're heading in the right direction, but that's not quite complete. Do you or anyone else have something to add?"

thinking, to clarify their knowledge on a certain topic, and to lead to new learning (Clay, 1993).

For example, during a lesson on the water cycle, a second-grade teacher was reading aloud *Down Comes the Rain* (Branley, 1997) to her class. The students were all Latino, and many were Spanish dominant and learning English at school. As the teacher was reading the book aloud, she often stopped to ask questions and hear students' comments. During the discussion, the teacher mentioned that weather forecasters often report the chance of precipitation—one of the vocabulary words and important concepts in their thematic unit. The students were actively involved in the discussion, but at times their comments evidenced their rather naïve perspectives. Here is an excerpt of the ensuing conversation:

- Teacher: Do you watch the weatherman on TV? What is he telling us when he talks about precipitation?
- Student: It means rain. But, teacher, the weatherman lied. He said we get rain today. We don't get rain today.
- Teacher: OK, but let's talk about that; let's think that through. What does the weatherman do? He's a scientist. So, what does he do that we do in our experiments?
- Student: Does he have to do predictions like us?
- Teacher: Yes, he does. And sometimes what happens?
- Student: Predictions don't always work.
- Teacher: That's right! But remember, a weatherman has to go to school for many, many years. A weatherman studies a lot and then has to use what he knows to make a prediction.
- Student: OK, teacher, the weatherman is good.
- Teacher: He does try to be a good scientist, and most of the time his predictions are correct.

Responses in a language other than English

It can be very frustrating for monolingual English teachers to have students use their first languages, rather than English, to respond in class. Some teachers perceive that students who do so are being inconsiderate, but rather teachers can choose to see this behavior as encouraging (see Table 3). At least such a student seems to be interested and transacting with the lesson. In fact, studies show that stu-

TABLE 3
Examples of teacher elaborations of responses in a language other than English

- "All right. That sounds interesting to me. How can we say that in English?" (Wait and model conventional English.)
- "Do you know any words in English to say that?"
- "Call on someone (one of your friends) to help tell us what you said in English."
- "Can you help us translate that into English?" (Repeat the question; call on more than one student, and then model an appropriate response in English.)

dents' other-language talk in classrooms is often largely on task (Kasten, 1997; Valdes, 1998). Even when students who share a common first language are whispering to one another, their language usually revolves around explaining what the teacher is talking about or clarifying the procedures that the students are expected to complete. Generally, teachers should not feel threatened when other languages are spoken in their classrooms. In fact, some young learners sometimes don't know which of their words and structures are or are not English. One example is when a second-grade English-language learner confidently labeled the black-and-white, sometimes smelly animal she saw in a book as "el skunko." This example evidences the language-transference confusion that can occur, so teachers should not be surprised when especially young students mix and match their languages.

Responses that are questions

Given the preponderance of teacher talk as mentioned previously, student questions might be rare or unexpected. But students' queries are important diagnostic opportunities for teachers and should be appreciated and responded to carefully (see Table 4). In a particular high-performing first-grade classroom known to the authors, the teacher had a jar of 100 marbles at the front of the room. She used the marbles to encourage student questions. The challenge was that for each student's question that was asked "to help all learn more," the teacher would move a marble from one glass jar to another glass jar. When the 100 marbles were all transferred to the second jar, the class could plan a special reward. The students' goal was often to earn more recess or a

TABLE 4
Examples of teacher responses to student questions

"Thank you for asking. Understanding is important. Good learners ask lots of questions."

"Thank you for asking a question. Questions can help us all be better learners."

"Wow! That is a great (or important) question. Do you know anything that will help you answer that question?"

"I am glad you asked that question. How can the rest of us answer your question?"

"Let me first answer your question, and then I will ask my question again."

"Do you want to call on another student to answer your question? Do you want one of your classmates to help you?"

TABLE 5
Examples of teacher elaborations of incorrect or confusing responses

"Help me understand what you mean. Tell me again."

"Tell me more so I know what you're thinking."

"I want to know what you are thinking. Can you tell me more?"

"You said _____. But, I thought that _____. Please, help me understand."

"Do you think _____ or _____?" (Give a right answer as one of the options.)

popcorn party, but the teacher's goal was to encourage good questions that benefited everyone in the learning process. The students learned that good students have good questions and that not knowing something was part of the process, as long as one asked questions to find out more. These students were motivated to ask questions that the teacher would acknowledge with a marble, and the questioning process afforded opportunities for more learning in a shared community.

Responses that are inappropriate or wrong

Again, when students respond incorrectly or insufficiently to teacher questions, the teacher can feel disappointed because the teaching-learning process does not seem to be proceeding smoothly and effi-

ciently. However, teachers must avoid the temptation to blame the student for not listening or processing the question well. Instead, the teacher should use incorrect responses as a means of ongoing assessment to determine students' needs and misunderstandings (Hudelson, 1984). If teachers check student understanding during instruction, rather than wait until the end of the lesson, the teacher has the opportunity to reteach or clarify misunderstandings (see Table 5). One differentiation the teacher can make regarding incorrect responses is whether the source of the miscommunication is content or language based. Some students lack the linguistic ability in English to express themselves clearly, but this does not preclude their comprehension of the material. With support from the teacher, ELLs can refine their linguistic competence so that they can communicate their knowledge of content. The following is an example to illustrate this point.

Before reading a book about sharks, the teacher asked the students to tell what they knew about the commonly feared creatures. The teacher was momentarily surprised when one student said that her older sister had swum with sharks. Fortunately, the teacher followed up with more discussion.

Teacher: Araceli, did your sister really swim with sharks? Was she in the ocean with sharks?

Araceli: Yeah, at Sea World, but in the big pool.

Teacher: Oh, did your family visit Sea World and did your sister swim in the pool with sharks? Or was it with dolphins?

Araceli: Yeah, that's right, with some dolphins.

Teacher: So, are dolphins and sharks the same? Or are they different ocean animals?

Araceli: Maybe they different?

Teacher: OK, let's read this book and see if we can learn how sharks and dolphins are the same or different. Thank you, Araceli, for telling us something about your trip to Sea World.

Silent responses

Sometimes a student might respond with silence or the ubiquitous "I don't know." When this happens, teachers can be easily frustrated and tempted to make judgments about a student's ability and motivation to learn. Such a conclusion is at best premature and certainly not productive. So, rather than move on to another student or provide the answer him- or herself, a teacher needs to com-

municate belief in the student's ability to contribute more and maintain high expectations for student performance (see Table 6). Waiting a few more seconds for an answer is certainly one option. Smiling, moving closer to the student (while respecting cultural proxemics), and rephrasing the query more directly or in a more conversational style may also encourage the student to respond. Asking for other contributions and then returning to the student after a few other students have participated communicates a kind, but powerful, message that values the student's participation. It says to the student, "I am giving you some time, but I do want you to contribute to our discussion."

Some of these actions may seem insistent, but they can be done courteously and with warmth. The consequences of not following up on students' responses can be far more detrimental. Our classroom observations (mentioned earlier) included well-behaved, less gregarious students simply remaining silent through hours of classroom instruction, despite stated school goals that targeted English-language proficiency for limited-English-speaking students. Honoring silence has limited value in such a context and unfortunately can perpetuate teachers' and students' notions that ELLs should not be fully integrated into classroom activities. When ELLs say "I don't know," they may be meaning that they "don't know how" to express their knowledge in English. Teachers can facilitate these students' need for communicative competence by asking students to demonstrate or draw their responses, as well as giving them options for participating in the discussion.

TABLE 6
Examples of teacher elaborations
in response to student silence

"I think you know something about this, and I would like to hear what you have to say."

"Can you show us what you know by acting it out or drawing it?"

"I'm going to come back to you and ask you again. Please get ready to talk with us."

"I want to hear from you in this lesson. Get ready with an answer or a question."

"I expect you to know this/to have something to say. Let me know when you are ready." (Provide a yes or no question or an either/or choice.)

Increasing classroom talk with English-language learners

The Response Protocol recommended here is characterized by two key elements: valuation of students' response efforts and the teacher's efforts to scaffold elaboration. Teachers may not feel entirely comfortable using the examples provided, but they can plan and employ similar responses that value and extend ELLs' talk in the classroom. The goal is to establish a community in which all members are respected and accountable. One way to think about classroom interaction is to "beckon, broaden, and build" students' language and conceptual knowledge. Teachers must seek student input by beckoning their participation and the contribution of their ideas. Once offered, students' contributions should be elaborated or broadened to address more of the instructional content and develop more sophisticated language use. Finally, the teacher can build the student's concept knowledge and language competence by exploring the context, emphasizing the key components, and rephrasing structures.

If teachers model the use of feedback that extends student responses, students may likely follow the teacher's example in their small-group discussion with peers as has happened among students trained in reciprocal teaching. Thus, the patterns that are established during teacher-directed interaction may be used in conversations between students. It is important that supportive protocols become naturalized ways of talking about learning (Johnston, 2004) and pivotal platforms for critical thinking. Teacher educators can use the examples and recommendations offered here as a framework for preservice teachers' observations of field assignments. It is also recommended that preservice and inservice teachers monitor their own discourse in classroom settings to make productive adjustments.

The focus in this discussion is on English-language learners, but these discourse patterns apply in many learning contexts. However, it is ELLs who are more likely to become passive because language and cultural differences can disconnect them from mainstream schooling. Teachers at all grade levels face the challenge to increase and improve the language use of their students; thus educators should consider what they do and could do better and then apply communication structures

that are appropriate for both the age and proficiency of the student. The following are some general guidelines.

- Uphold high expectations for student participation. Expect everyone to contribute. During key discussions, use a class roster to keep track of students' participation levels and employ ways to get students talking beyond having them raise their hands (e.g., choral responses, shared reading, and paired discussions).
- Practice behaviors that value and elaborate students' contributions. Smile and share common courtesies. Make eye contact and move closer to the speaker, if possible, unless these gestures seem to make a student uncomfortable.
- Allow sufficient wait time, including patient pauses that support students' possible need for code switching (i.e., thinking or speaking in one language and switching to another). Repeating the question or prompt allows more time for processing while engaging more students.
- Use yes or no, either, or other prompts to bridge language gaps. Because oral language production competence follows reception skills, students can comprehend more than they can verbalize. Giving students a way to show their knowledge without having to construct complete sentences keeps students involved and scaffolds their use of English to evidence their understanding.
- Accept phrases and partial answers and model more complete sentences. Helping students elaborate their ideas into full sentences with academic structures and terms will help them to write their ideas down in more standard English.
- Model standard pronunciation and grammar. Slowing down, oversimplifying, or speaking more loudly are not necessary. Rephrasing and gesturing to help convey meaning are more helpful. Remember to amplify, not simplify (Gibbons, 2002).
- Find time to make small talk on a one-to-one basis. Ask questions frequently and listen carefully to student responses. Making time for less intimidating exchanges (e.g., small groups, individual conferences) may provide

information that you can use when leading whole-group discussions later.

- Don't relent on your expectation of participation. Practice possible follow-up responses to enlarge your response repertoire. Videotape some key class discussions to help self-assess your effectiveness with ELLs.
- Be a good listener, focusing on the content of the message rather than its grammatical structure. Acknowledging a student's message is likely to increase interaction, while correcting grammar may not and, in fact, might shift the focus from content to form.
- Learn some key phrases in the student's native language to make a connection and to share the language-learning process with your students.


These guidelines can help teachers to become more exploratory in their interactions with students of varying language skills, intellectual levels, and dispositions. They can serve as a challenge, especially to preservice and novice teachers who can expect to have ELLs in their classrooms. New teachers may not readily anticipate the needs of their ELLs, although teacher education programs have put greater emphasis on meeting the needs of culturally and linguistically diverse learners. Still, the challenge to use ordinary words to accomplish extraordinary things remains. The Response Protocol is one way to support teachers' efforts to increase engagement among ELLs in classroom discourse.

Kathleen Mohr teaches at the University of North Texas (Teacher Education and Administration, University of North Texas, PO Box 310740, Denton, TX 76203, USA). E-mail mohr@coe.unt.edu. Eric Mohr teaches at Frisco High School in Frisco, Texas, USA.

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