Teaching with texts is all the more challenging in today’s classroom, where the range of linguistic and cultural diversity has been increasing steadily since the 1960s. The growing diversity in the student population is often reflected in the way learners think about themselves as readers and writers. More often than not, students of diverse backgrounds struggle with reading and writing in academic contexts. Much like the struggling readers and writers we described in Chapter 3, culturally and linguistically diverse learners often are caught in a cycle of school failure that contributes to marginal achievement and high dropout rates. Typically, they are placed in low-ability groups where instruction is based on a limited, watered-down version of the curriculum. As a result, the strengths that diverse learners bring to instructional situations usually go untapped.

Organizing Principle

Teachers respond to linguistic and cultural differences in their classrooms by scaffolding instruction in the use of vocabulary and comprehension strategies and by creating classroom environments that encourage talking and working together.
Nowhere is the reality of a marginal school experience more pronounced than in the academic lives of English language learners. Their school experience is often characterized by failure, disconnection, and resistance to reading and writing in academic contexts. The increasing number of learners whose first language is one other than English demands literacy-related instruction that is strategic and culturally responsive, with high learning expectations for all students. St. Paul’s quote wears well in an era of unprecedented classroom diversity. Today’s teacher is a teacher of all kinds of learners, with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds and academic needs. And none of their voices is without significance in the classroom.

How can teachers be responsive to linguistic and cultural diversity in their classrooms while maintaining high standards for content literacy and learning? Understanding the cultural and linguistic differences between mainstream and nonmainstream learners is an important first step, as the organizing principle of this chapter suggests: Teachers respond to linguistic and cultural differences in their classrooms by scaffolding instruction in the use of vocabulary and comprehension strategies and by creating classroom environments that encourage talking and working together.
We began our teaching careers in the 1960s in a suburban high school just outside of Albany, New York, during the height of the civil rights movement and the Vietnam War. The times were tumultuous in the wake of great social change. Practically every facet of American society was open to critical examination, if not reform, including the nation’s schools. The landmark 1954 U.S. Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* ruled that “separate but equal” schools were unconstitutional and laid the groundwork for educational reform in the 1960s. The civil rights movement fueled the legislative agenda of President Lyndon Johnson’s Great Society. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited discrimination in public institutions on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin. Also in 1964, the Economic Opportunity Act resulted in educational programs, such as Head Start and Upward Bound, that are still in existence today. In 1965, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) established compensatory educational programs (Title 1) to provide educational opportunities for low-income students from minority backgrounds. In addition, the Bilingual Education Act of 1967 made it possible for schools to receive federal funding for minority groups who were non-English speaking.

Despite the social and educational reforms taking place in the 1960s, it was business as usual at the high school where we taught. The school seemed impervious to change. In a student body of more than 1,000 students, no more than 1 or 2 percent of the students were people of color or immigrants whose first language was one other than English.

One of our students during our first year of teaching, Johnny, was the oldest son of Hungarian immigrants. He worked after school at his uncle’s garage where he pumped gas and did minor repairs on cars. He used to work on our beat-up, old Chevy Impala whenever it broke down and needed repair. Anyone who took the time to get to know him could tell that Johnny was a bright young man, but in school he was mostly a quiet

**Frame of Mind**

1. Why are today’s classrooms more diverse than they were several decades ago?

2. What are some of the cultural and linguistic differences that students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds bring to classroom learning situations?

3. Why do English language learners struggle with content literacy tasks, and how does sheltered instruction make content more accessible to them while providing additional language support?

4. How can teachers scaffold instruction to develop vocabulary-building strategies for diverse learners?

5. How are the questioning the author (QtA) strategy and the directed reading–thinking activity (DR–TA) similar? How are they different?

6. Why is classroom talk especially important to English language learners, and how can teachers create an environment for discussion in their classrooms?
student who kept to himself. Some would call him a loner, but at the garage he was sociable, even outgoing, with his uncle’s customers.

In retrospect, the school’s culture did not reflect or even recognize Johnny’s culture. He was one of the “forgotten” students at school who went largely unnoticed, except when he got into trouble. To this day, we still recall how he would do everything in his power to avoid literacy, even disrupt a class, whenever reading and writing became the focus of instruction. As novice teachers, we didn’t have a clue about how to deal with his resistance to reading and writing activities. Neither did many of the other teachers. As it turned out, Johnny dropped out of school at the age of nineteen and went to work for his uncle.

Teachers who have worked with students are no strangers to resistant learners. Mary Krogness (1995), a veteran teacher of twenty-nine years, wrote a book about the resistant adolescent learners she taught in a metropolitan area school district. These seventh and eighth graders were all too often overage, underprepared, and weighted down with emotional baggage. Nearly all were students of color. They scored low on achievement tests and were tracked in basic skills classes for most of their academic lives. Yet Krogness observed that her students were smart in ways not recognized or valued in school: They could “read” people—gauge their feelings and interpret attitudes, actions, reactions, tone of voice, and body language. The challenge for Krogness became that of showing her students how to use their “street smarts” to analyze texts and interpret current events. Her aim, as she put it, was “to hook my students on talking, reading, and writing, to immerse them in language and give them plenty of practice in doing what they’d learned not to like or feel good about” (p. 5).

Krogness’s students are noticeably different from those she taught two decades earlier. Changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the public school population in the United States have been dramatic. Significant demographic shifts in the population have resulted in a society that is increasingly diverse. For whatever reason, students of diverse backgrounds—that is to say, students who may be distinguished by their ethnicity, social class, language, or achievement level—often struggle in their academic programs. As Wang, Reynolds, and Walberg (1994–1995) put it, these students challenge teachers to the limits of their commitment, insights, and skill. However, the more that teachers develop understanding, attitudes, and strategies related to student diversity, the better equipped they will be to adapt instruction to the differences in their classrooms.

**Cultural Differences in Today’s Schools**

Most people, other than those who study culture, probably don’t think much about what it means to be immersed in a culture, just as fish probably don’t think much about what it means to be immersed in water. The term culture is a complex and multidimensional concept at best. Culture has been defined by Peregoy
and Boyle (2001) as the shared beliefs, values, and rule-governed patterns of behavior that define a group and are required for group membership. On one level are the surface features of a culture—its foods, dress, holidays, and celebrations. On another level are deeper elements, which include not only values and beliefs systems but also “family structures and child-rearing practices, language and
non-verbal communication, expectations, gender roles, biases—all the fundamentals of life that affect learning” (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002, p. 197).

Language and culture are inextricably connected. Native speakers learn language in social settings, and in the process, they also learn their culture’s norms for using language. As you might expect, different cultures have different rules that are always culturally defined and culturally specific. When a student’s norms differ from the teacher’s expectations, communication is often hindered. Suppose a high school teacher overheard two friends, Lily and Sugar, talking in the school cafeteria during lunch time:

Sugar: How was your weekend?
Lily: I had a money time! The bomb and me put on our finest bling bling and went partying Saturday night. Let me tell you Suge, he’s no chickenhead. He’s a real fly!
Sugar: No kidding. I bet you two looked really cizool.
Lily: We had a crunk time until we ran into Jasmine and her do boy.
Sugar: What happened?
Lily: Well one thing led to another. Jasmine starting hissing and her do boy stabbed the bomb. So we decided to jet and click up with some classier folks.

Lily and Sugar are using language and slang expressions that have made their way from rap music and the hip-hop cultural scene into the vernacular of today’s youth. About what are the two friends talking? Who is the bomb? What’s does it mean to be a chickenhead? A do boy? What does it mean to have a money time? A crunk time? To stab? To jet? To click up? Suppose you were the teacher in the cafeteria and were unfamiliar with the language that the friends were using. You might jump to unwarranted conclusions about what happened Saturday night. Did someone get stabbed in the literal sense of the word as it is used in mainstream culture? Because language use is culturally specific, it is easy for teachers not to recognize that language rules are indeed in effect for speakers of other dialects or speakers with different cultural norms for communicating.

From Monocultural to Multicultural Classrooms

The school memories of many teachers are most likely to be of monocultural classrooms like ours when we began teaching in the 1960s. The monoculture represents the mainstream culture in U.S. society, a culture that is rooted in European American beliefs, standards, and values. The rapidly changing demography of the United States and its schools, however, is transforming the country into a society that is increasingly multicultural.

Sturtevant (1992) studied content literacy practices in a multicultural context in a northern Virginia high school. An American history teacher in her study...
began the school year with twenty-nine students, but by May, the size of the class had dwindled to eighteen. Most of the Hispanic students in this class had moved from the school district, many returning to their home countries. Of the remaining students, there were five African Americans, two whites, three Asians (a Chinese, a Korean, and a Cambodian), two Africans (one from Ethiopia and the other from Zambia), one European (from Germany), and five Latin Americans (four from El Salvador and one from Peru). All of the immigrant students spoke English with limited proficiency but well enough to be mainstreamed into the regular classroom.

The American history teacher, born in a small all-white Ohio town, drew on his own experiences in the Peace Corps to build positive social relationships in the classroom. While in the Peace Corps, he had learned what it meant to be a member of a minority cultural group on a small Caribbean island of almost entirely black inhabitants. In class, he was sensitive to cultural and language differences, and his willingness to understand these differences enabled him to teach more effectively. For example, he recognized that “kids become distrustful” if the teacher views their culture as inferior or their language as deficient. In class discussions, he avoided correcting students’ English, believing that it was more important for them to explore ideas openly and critically without fear of humiliation than to speak “correct” English. His sensitivity to cultural and dialect differences allowed his students to interact with one another and with him in the way they spoke to peers and adults in their home or community. Sturtevant (1992) concluded that the teacher’s response to student diversity in his classroom made a difference in the academic lives of his students. In diverse classrooms, cultural and linguistic sensitivity is a crucial first step in working with students to achieve academic standards. Teaching for cultural understanding will also make a difference in the way diverse learners respond to instruction.

**Teaching for Cultural Understanding**

Various instructional perspectives reflect different belief systems related to the teaching of multicultural concepts in today’s classrooms. Diaz (2001) describes these perspectives within the context of four distinct instructional approaches. In the *contributions approach*, teachers typically emphasize culturally specific celebrations and holidays within the curriculum, such as Martin Luther King Day. The contributions approach reflects the surface level of a culture but does not make provisions for in-depth study of its deeper elements.

Somewhat related to the contributions approach is an instructional perspective that is additive in nature. The *additive approach* underscores the teaching of various themes related to multicultural concepts and issues. These concepts and issues are integrated into the curriculum through the development of a thematic unit of study, but on the whole the curriculum remains relatively the same throughout the year.

When teachers attempt to help students understand diverse ethnic and cultural perspectives by providing them with ongoing opportunities to read
about concepts and events, make judgments about them, think critically, and generate their own conclusions and opinions, they are using a transformative approach. This approach, combined with the next one, lends itself well to content literacy strategies that emphasize critical analysis and interpretation. According to Diaz (2001), an extension of the transformative approach involves project learning. The decision-making/social action approach provides learners with opportunities to engage in activities and projects related to cultural concepts and issues, particularly those issues and problems dealing with social action.

Teachers need to go beyond limiting the content of instructional lessons to celebrations or one-time only thematic units related to multicultural concepts. Today’s teacher needs to provide students with literacy and learning experiences that will provide them with the cross-cultural knowledge and skills they will need as future adults in a nation that has become increasingly diverse. Multicultural literature helps students develop cross-cultural knowledge and skills.

**Integrating Multicultural Literature across the Curriculum**

In the next chapter, we discuss the role of literature across the curriculum and suggest multicultural book titles and strategies for classroom use. When teachers use multicultural literature in the classroom, they provide students with texts that are not only engaging but also recognize the unique contributions of each culture and the similarities of the human experience across cultures. At the same time, they help nonmainstream cultures appreciate and value their heritage and give all students the benefits of understanding ways of knowing about the world that are different from their own. Choosing multicultural texts to integrate into the curriculum is no easy task. Asking several questions can help you select those books that will be most useful to students in your classroom (Yokota 1993):

- Is this book good literature? Is the plot strong? Is characterization true to experience?
- Are setting, theme, and style well developed?
- Is this book culturally accurate? Will it help readers gain a true sense of the culture?
- Is the book rich in cultural details? Do details that give readers insight into the nuances of daily life enhance the story? Or is the culture overgeneralized?
- Are cultural issues presented comprehensively? Do they have enough depth and realism for readers to get a true sense of how culture affects the lives of people?
• Are minorities relevant? Are members of a minority group present for a reason, or could the story be told as easily about any cultural group? Token involvement of minority characters gives little sense of their unique, culturally rooted experience.

• Are dialogue and relationships culturally authentic?

Teaching for cultural understanding and using multicultural literature create a community of learners within the four walls of the classroom. Within such learning communities, it is important for teachers to understand the ways in which diverse learners “come to know” and to tap into students’ “funds of knowledge.”

Ways of Knowing

Heath (1983) reminds us that it is crucially important to be aware that students from diverse cultural backgrounds may bring different ways of knowing, different styles of questioning, and different patterns of interaction to school. For example, different cultures may have different attitudes, expectations, and assumptions about the value of reading and writing and what it means to be a reader and writer. Alicia, a Latino student, didn’t want to be a “schoolgirl.” To be a schoolgirl meant always having her head in a book, always doing homework. However, Alicia had little trouble getting involved in school activities that revolved around meaningful, collaborative literacy activities, such as tutoring younger students and writing social studies texts for them (Heath & Mangiola 1989).

Different cultures may place a different emphasis and value on various cognitive activities and styles of questioning. Some societies, for example, emphasize memorization and analytical thinking over the ability to experiment or to make predictions (Fillmore 1981). The cognitive styles of culturally diverse students may differ. Heath (1983) discovered that African American students experienced academic difficulty in their classrooms partly because of their lack of familiarity with the kinds of questions they were expected to answer in school. For example, based on family interaction patterns in the African American community that she studied, Heath found that students were not familiar with school questions, asking them to describe or identify the attributes of objects or concepts. The students were much more familiar with analogy-type questions comparing one object or concept with another. When teachers became aware of the differences between the kinds of questions they asked and the kinds of questions familiar to the students, they were able to make adjustments in their questioning style. As a result, the teachers noticed a marked contrast in their students’ participation and interest in lessons.

Ways of knowing are intertwined with ways of interacting and learning. Rather than place emphasis on individual competition, some cultural groups prize group interaction, helping one another, and collaborative activity. Reyes and Molner (1991), for example, suggest that cooperative learning is “more culturally congruent” with students from Mexican American backgrounds. The research
support for cooperative classroom strategies, especially in diverse learning situations, is impressive (Little Soldier 1989; Slavin 1987).

**Students’ Funds of Knowledge**

The powerful role that culture plays in shaping students’ behaviors and their knowledge of the world often goes unnoticed in classrooms. Understanding the sociocultural dynamics of home and community, gives us a broader perspective on the worldviews students bring to school. Culturally and linguistically diverse students typically come from working-class families where their individual lives are inseparable from the social dynamics of the household and community in which they live. A teacher who makes a point of understanding the home culture, ethnic background, and community of students is in a better position (1) to understand the kinds of knowledge that culturally diverse students bring to learning situations and (2) to adjust the curriculum to their sociocultural strengths.

Luis Moll (1994) contends that much is to be gained from understanding the “social networks” of the households in a cultural group. These networks are crucial to families, who often engage in exchanging “funds of knowledge.” These funds of knowledge may represent occupationally related skills and information that families share with one another as a means of economic survival. Moll argues that the social and cultural resources that students bring to school—their funds of knowledge—are rarely tapped in classroom learning contexts. Using the community’s rich resources and funds of knowledge builds on one of students’ greatest assets: the social networks established within a cultural group. One such resource is its people. Moll (1994) puts it this way: “One has to believe that there are diverse types of people that can be helpful in the classroom even though they do not have professional credentials. Wisdom and imagination are distributed in the same way among professional and nonprofessional groups” (p. 194).

In a middle-level classroom, Mexican American students in Tucson, Arizona, engage in a study of construction which includes inquiry into the history of dwellings and different ways of building structures. The students have access to a wide array of reading materials from the library to focus their investigation: trade books; magazines, newspapers, and reference resources, to name a few. The teacher builds on students’ reading by inviting parents and community members to speak to them about their jobs in the construction industry. For example, a father visits the class to describe his work as a mason.

Showing interest in students’ home cultures and ethnic backgrounds builds trust in the classroom. Jackson (1994) believes that building trust with students of diverse backgrounds is a culturally responsive strategy that is often overlooked. One way to create trust may be as simple as learning students’ names and pronouncing them correctly, and perhaps having them share the unique meanings and special significance of their first names. Teachers may also invite them to research and share information about their family’s ethnic background, using questions

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**Response Journal**

Think about the funds of knowledge that you possess based on your cultural background and heritage. Describe how you make use (or will make use) of such knowledge in your teaching.
suggested by Covert (1989): What generation in the United States do you repre-
sent? Are you and your siblings the first of your family to be born in this coun-
try? Were you foreign born? From where did you or your ancestors migrate? What
made them wish to come here? Does your immediate or extended family practice
ethnic or cultural customs which you or they value or with which you or they
identify? Do you or your relatives speak your ethnic group’s language? What oc-
cupations are represented in your family background?“

Linguistic Differences in Today’s Schools

Linguistic differences among today’s student population are strikingly evident in
many school districts throughout the United States. From the East Coast to the
West Coast, and from the Gulf to the Northern Great Lakes, the increasingly large
number of immigrants from non-European nations is influencing how content
area teachers approach instruction. It is no exaggeration to suggest that in some
urban school districts more than fifty languages are spoken (Banks 2001).

When immigrant students maintain a strong identification with their culture
and native language, they are more likely to succeed academically, and they have
more positive self-concepts about their ability to learn (Banks 2001; Diaz 2001;
Garcia 2002). Schools, however, tend to view linguistically diverse students
whose first language is one other than English from a deficit model, not a differ-
ence model. For these English language learners, instructional practices currently
are compensatory in nature: “That is, they are premised on the assumption that
language diversity is an illness that needs to be cured” (Diaz 2001, p. 159).

In addition, regional variations in language usage, commonly known as dia-
lects, are a complicated issue for teachers. In truth, all English language users
speak a dialect of English, which is rooted in such factors as age, gender, socio-
economic status, and the region of the country where one was born and grew up.
Even presidents of the United States speak a dialect! The difficulty with dialect
differences in the classroom is the value assigned to dialects—the perceived good-
ness or badness of one particular language variation over another. Roberts (1985),
however, suggests that language variations are neither good nor bad, and that
such judgments are often about the people who make them rather than about clar-
ity or precision. Delpit (1988) argues quite convincingly that teachers need to re-
spect and recognize the strengths of diverse learners who use dialect in the
classroom.

Dialect Use in the Classroom

Cultural variation in the use of language has a strong influence on literacy learn-
ing. Even though students whose first language is not English do not have full
control of English grammatical structures, pronunciation, and vocabulary, they
can engage in reading and writing activities (Goodman & Goodman 1978). When students use their own culturally acceptable conversational style to talk and write about ideas they read in texts, they are likely to become more content literate and to improve their literacy skills. Au and Mason (1981), for example, describe how minority Hawaiian learners improved their reading abilities when they were allowed to use their home language to talk about texts.

Language differences should not be mistaken for language deficits among culturally diverse students. Many of the low-achieving high school students in the rural Georgia classroom that Dillon (1989) studied were African Americans who spoke a dialect commonly referred to as black English vernacular. Black dialect is acquired through family interactions and participation in the culture of the community. The teacher in Dillon's study had much success in leading text-related discussions because of his sensitivity to his students' dialect as a tool for communication in the class. As Dillon put it, the teacher “allowed students to use dialect in his classroom because they were more comfortable with it and more effective communicators” (p. 245).

Shouldn't students from minority backgrounds learn to use standard American English? The question is a rhetorical one. As teachers, our stance toward the use of standard American English is critical. Standard American English, often thought of as the “news broadcast—type” English used in the conduct of business, is the language of the dominant mainstream culture in U.S. society—the “culture of power,” according to Delpit (1988). Delpit explains that the rules and codes of the culture of power, including the rules and codes for language use, are acquired by students from mainstream backgrounds through interaction with their families. Minority students, however, whose families are outside the mainstream culture, do not acquire the same rules and codes. If students are going to have access to opportunities in mainstream society, schools must acquaint students from minority backgrounds with the rules and codes of the culture of power. Not making standard American English accessible to students from minority backgrounds puts them at a disadvantage in competing with their mainstream counterparts.

Although it is important for culturally diverse learners to receive explicit instruction in the use of standard American English, *when and under what circumstances* become critical instructional issues. All students should understand how cultural contexts influence what they read, write, hear, say, and view. Language arts classes are probably the appropriate place to provide explicit instruction in the functional use and conventions of standard American English. Although becoming proficient in standard American English may be an important school goal for all students, it should not be viewed as a prerequisite for literate classroom behavior (Au 1993). When it is viewed as a prerequisite, teachers deny students the opportunity to use their own language as a tool for learning. Increasing their command of standard American English, in and of itself, will not improve students’ abilities to think critically, “since students’ own languages can serve just as well for verbal expression and reasoning” (p. 130).
English Language Learners

English language learners are those students who speak English as a nonnative language. Because their home language is that of a minority group—for example, Spanish, Navajo, or Vietnamese—they are considered to be language minority students. English language learners are, for the most part, the children of immigrants who left their homelands for one reason or another. Some English language learners, however, are born in the United States. As Peregoy and Boyle (2001) explain,

Many recent immigrants have left countries brutally torn by war or political strife in regions such as Southeast Asia, Central America, and Eastern Europe; others have immigrated for economic reasons. Still others come to be reunited with families who are already here or because of the educational opportunities they may find in the United States. Finally, many English language learners were born in the United States and some of them, such as Native Americans of numerous tribal heritages, have roots in American soil that go back for countless generations. (p. 3)

Immigration patterns have changed dramatically in the past one hundred years. At the onset of the twentieth century, the vast majority of immigrants (87 percent) were from Europe (Lapham 1993). At the beginning of the twenty-first century, however, the majority of immigrants have come from Latin America (57 percent). Based on the most recent data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2000), as displayed in Table 4.1, there are approximately 25,800,000 foreign born living in the United States as of December 1999 (Tse 2001).

Bilingual and ESL Programs

English language learners vary in their use of English. Some may have little or no proficiency in the use of English. Others may have limited English skills; still others may use English proficiently and are mainstreamed into the regular curriculum.

What is language proficiency? It has been defined as “the ability to use a language effectively and appropriately throughout the range of social, personal, school, and work situations required for daily living in a given society” (Peregoy & Boyle 2001, p. 29). Language proficiency, therefore, encompasses both oral and written language processes, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

In the United States, there is an array of instructional programs for English language learners. Programs vary greatly, depending on the number of English language learners enrolled in a school district. Many with limited English proficiency are placed in bilingual and English as a second language (ESL) programs. Bilingual and ESL programs are designed specifically to meet the academic, cultural, and linguistic needs of English language learners until they are proficient enough in English to be mainstreamed into the regular curriculum.

Bilingual programs are designed to teach English and to provide instruction in the core curriculum using the home language of the English learner. Bilingual programs reach only a small percentage of students, despite a growing body of research.
that suggests when immigrant students maintain a strong identification with their
culture and native language, they are more likely to succeed academically and have
more positive self-concepts about their abilities to learn (Banks 2001; Diaz 2001;
Garcia 2002). ESL programs differ from bilingual programs in that they are taught
entirely in English in schools where there are many language-minority groups rep-
resented, making it difficult to implement bilingual instruction.

Bilingual and ESL teachers provide invaluable compensatory services for lan-
guage minority students with limited English proficiency. When these students
are mainstreamed into the regular curriculum, however, they often struggle with
content literacy tasks. Let’s take a closer look at some of the reasons diverse learn-
ers struggle with reading and writing in content area classrooms.

What Makes Content Literacy Difficult
for English Language Learners?
Once they are mainstreamed into the regular curriculum, English language learn-
ers often struggle with content area texts. In schools where tracking is used as an
organizational tool, a disproportionate number of English language learners have
been placed in lower-track classrooms, even though the notion that students
learn best with others of similar achievement levels has not been supported by
research (Allington 2001; Oakes 1985). In mainstream classes, reading textbooks

### Table 4.1 Number and Percentage of U.S. Foreign Born and Country of Origin

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Foreign Born March 1997 Number (percentage)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Countries</td>
<td>25,779,000 (100.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td>7,017,000 (27.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>1,132,000 (4.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China and Hong Kong</td>
<td>1,107,000 (4.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuba</td>
<td>913,000 (3.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>770,000 (3.0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>748,000 (2.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominican Republic</td>
<td>632,000 (2.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>607,000 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>606,000 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>591,000 (2.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

is one of the most cognitively demanding, context-reduced tasks that language-minority students will encounter (Cummins 1994). Some students may become frustrated by texts because of issues related to background knowledge. According to Kang (1994),

Some information or concepts in textbooks may presuppose certain background knowledge that native speakers may take for granted but that may be different or lacking in some ESL students. Culture-specific background knowledge developed in students’ native country, community, or home may affect their comprehension, interpretation, and development of social, cultural, historical, and even scientific concepts. Even if students possess the background knowledge presumed for a particular text, they may not be able to activate it to relate and organize new information. (p. 649)

The vocabulary load of content area textbooks is also a problem for some second-language learners. The academic language of texts is not the language of conversational speech. If students have limited literacy skills in their own native language, they will obviously experience a great deal of frustration and failure with English texts. Moreover, if students are good readers in their native language but have minimal proficiency in English, the language barrier may inhibit them from making effective use of their literacy skills.

Sheltered Instruction

When English language learners struggle with content literacy tasks, instruction should be specially designed to meet their academic and linguistic needs, which often include (1) learning grade-appropriate and academically demanding content; (2) learning the language of academic English as reflected in content subjects, texts, and classroom discourse; (3) engaging in appropriate classroom behavior and understanding participation rules and expectations in small groups and whole class instructional routines; and (4) mastering English vocabulary and grammar (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short 2000). Sheltered instruction, also known as SDAIE (specially designed academic instruction in English), is an approach to content area learning and language development that provides the instructional support needed to making grade-level content more accessible for English language learners while promoting English development (Echevarria & Graves 2003). Although the concept of “sheltering” English language learners is similar to the concept of scaffolding instruction for all learners who need instructional support to be successful with content literacy tasks, it has been adapted for use in two types of instructional contexts: (1) in mainstreamed, core curriculum classrooms made up of native speakers and nonnative speakers who are at an intermediate level of language proficiency and (2) in ESL classrooms made up of nonnative speakers who are at similar levels of language proficiency. Content area teachers are in a strategic position to make adaptations in the way they design and deliver instruction in classrooms with native and nonnative speakers. These adaptations in instructional design and delivery lead to additional lan-
language support for English language learners, as well as increased learning opportunities in the core curriculum.

One model for sheltered instruction, SIOP (sheltered instruction observation protocol), provides a comprehensive instructional framework that can be used in several ways to scaffold instruction for English language learners. First, the SIOP model serves as a blueprint for designing lessons that integrate content learning with additional language support for English language learners. Second, the SIOP model enhances instructional delivery by making teachers aware of highly effective practices and behaviors that will make a difference in the academic and language development of students. And third, the SIOP model provides an observational framework for rating teachers in sheltered classrooms. Figure 4.1 depicts the major components within the SIOP model: lesson preparation, instruction, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and assessment (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short 2000).

Sheltered instruction is a powerful approach to content area learning and language development. The literacy strategies described throughout this book may be incorporated into instructional routines for students in sheltered or nonsheltered classrooms. Many of the instructional practices, for example, that we developed in the previous chapter on struggling readers and writers, and those that we will develop in subsequent chapters, have been recommended by English language educators for use with language minority students (Diaz-Rico & Weed 2002; Echevarria & Graves 2003; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short 2000; Peregoy & Boyle 2001). As we turn our attention to vocabulary, comprehension, and discussion strategies in the remainder of this chapter, keep in mind that the instructional practices we describe can make a difference in the academic lives of all learners, depending on how thoughtful teachers adapt them to meet the academic and language needs of students in their classrooms.

Vocabulary Strategies

Linguistically diverse learners, whether they are good or poor readers, will encounter unfamiliar content area vocabulary during reading that may pose comprehension problems for them. In a study of bilingual readers, researchers discovered that good readers focused on increasing vocabulary (Jimenez, Garcia, & Pearson 1995, 1996). In addition, English language learners who struggle as readers benefited from vocabulary strategy instruction (Jimenez & Gamez 1996). Vocabulary strategy instruction is effective when a teacher helps English language learners to develop a few key terms in depth rather than attempting to have them learn many words superficially (Gersten & Jimenez 1994). Such instruction should take into account strategies and procedures that will help students build meaning for important concept terms. Vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS), concept of definition (CD) word maps, and vocabulary-building strategies scaffold students’ abilities to define concepts in the context of their use.
FIGURE 4.1 The Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP)

Observer: ______________________  Teacher: ______________________
Date: ______________________      School: ______________________
Grade: ______________________     ESL level: ______________________
Class: ______________________     Lesson: Multi-day  Single-day

I. Preparation
1. Clearly defined content objectives for students
2. Clearly defined language objectives for students
3. Content concepts appropriate for age and educational background level of students
4. Supplementary materials used to a high degree, making the lesson clear and meaningful (graphs, models, visuals)
5. Adaptation of content (e.g., text, assignment) to all levels of student proficiency
6. Meaningful activities that integrate lesson concepts (e.g., surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking

II. Instruction
(1) Building Background
7. Concepts explicitly linked to students' background experiences
8. Links explicitly made between past learning and new concepts
9. Key vocabulary emphasized (e.g., introduced, written, repeated, and highlighted for students to see)

(2) Comprehensible
10. Speech appropriate for students' proficiency level (e.g., slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners)
11. Explanation of academic tasks clear
12. Uses a variety of techniques to make content concepts clear (e.g., modeling, visuals, hands-on activities demonstrations, gestures, body language)

(3) Strategies
13. Provides ample opportunities for student to use strategies
14. Consistent use of scaffolding techniques throughout lesson, assisting and supporting student understanding
15. Teacher uses a variety of question types throughout the lesson including those that promote higher-order thinking skills throughout the lesson (e.g., literal, analytical, and interpretive questions)

(4) Interaction
16. Frequent opportunities for interactions and discussion between teacher/student and among students, which encourage elaborated responses about lesson concepts
17. Grouping configurations support language and content objectives of the lesson
18. Consistently provides sufficient wait time for student response
19. Ample opportunities for students to clarify key concepts in L1

(5) Practice/Application
20. Provides hands-on materials and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge
21. Provides activities for students to apply content and language knowledge in the classroom
22. Uses activities that integrate all language skills (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking)

(6) Lesson Delivery
23. Content objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery
24. Language objectives clearly supported by lesson delivery
25. Students engaged approximately 90–100% of the period
26. Pacing of the lesson appropriate to the students' ability level

III. Review/Assessment
27. Comprehensive review of key vocabulary
28. Comprehensive review of key content concepts
29. Regularly provides feedback to students on their output (e.g., language, content, work)
30. Conducts assessment of student comprehension and learning of all lesson objectives (e.g., spot checking, group response) throughout the lesson

Source: From Jana Echevarria, Maryellen Vogt, and Deborah Short, Making content comprehensible for English language learners: The SIOP model. Published by Allyn & Bacon, Boston, MA. Copyright © 2000 by Pearson Education Inc. Reprinted with permission of the publisher.
Vocabulary Self-Collection Strategy

Vocabulary self-collection strategy (VSS) promotes the long-term acquisition of language in an academic discipline (Haggard 1986). As a result of the repeated use of the strategy, students learn how to make decisions related to the importance of concepts and how to use context to determine what words mean. VSS begins once students read and discuss a text assignment. The teacher asks students, who are divided into teams, to nominate one word that they would like to learn more about. The word must be important enough for the team to share it with the class. The teacher also nominates a word. Here are several suggested steps in VSS:

1. **Divide the class into nominating teams of two to five students.** Together the students on a nominating team decide which word to select for emphasis in the text selection.

2. **Present the word that each team has selected to the entire class.** A spokesperson for each team identifies the nominated word and responds to the following questions:
   
   a. *Where is the word found in the text?* The spokesperson reads the passage in which the word is located or describes the context in which the word is used.
   
   b. *What do the team members think the word means?* The team decides on what the word means in the context in which it is used. They must use information from the surrounding context and may also consult reference resources.
   
   c. *Why did the team think the class should learn the word?* The team must tell the class why the word is important enough to single out for emphasis.

To introduce VSS to the students, the teacher first presents his or her nominated word to the class, modeling how to respond to the three questions. During the team presentations, the teacher facilitates the discussion, writes the nominated words on the board with their meanings, and invites class members to contribute additional clarifications of the words.

To conclude the class session, students record all the nominated words and their meanings in a section of their learning logs or in a separate vocabulary notebook. These lists may be used for review and study. As a consequence of VSS, the teacher has a set of student-generated words that can be incorporated into a variety of follow-up extension activities, as suggested in Chapter 8.

**Concept of Definition Word Maps**

Although VSS provides opportunities to define and explore the meanings of words used in text readings, many students are not aware of the types of information that contribute to the meaning of a concept. Nor have they internalized a strategy for defining a concept based on the information available to them. In
addition, words in a text passage often provide only partial contextual information for defining the meaning of a concept.

Concept of definition (CD) word maps provide a framework for organizing conceptual information in the process of defining a word (Schwartz 1988; Schwartz & Raphael 1985). Conceptual information can be organized in terms of three types of relationships: the general class or category in which the concept belongs, the attributes or properties of the concept and those that distinguish it from other members of the category, and examples or illustrations of the concept. Students from elementary school through high school can use CD to learn how to construct meaning for unknown words encountered in texts.

CD instruction supports vocabulary and concept learning by helping students internalize a strategy for defining and clarifying the meaning of unknown words. The hierarchical structure of a concept has an organizational pattern that is reflected by the general structure of a CD word map (see Figure 4.2).

In the center of the CD word map, students write the concept being studied. Working outward, they then write the word that best describes the general class or superordinate concept that includes the target concept. The answer to “What is it?” is the general class or category. Students then provide at least three examples of the concept as well as

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**FIGURE 4.2 General Structure for a CD Word Map**

![Diagram of a CD word map showing the structure with Category, Properties, Comparisons, and Illustrations]

three properties by responding, respectively, to the questions, “What are some examples?” and “What is it like?” Comparison of the target concept is also possible when students think of an additional concept that belongs to the general class but is different from the concept being studied. Figure 4.3 provides an example of a CD word map for the word tiger.

Because students use the general CD word map as a framework for defining unknown concepts that they encounter during reading, a teacher can easily combine CD instruction with VSS. Schwartz (1988) recommends a detailed plan for modeling CD with students. The plan includes demonstrating the value of CD by connecting its purpose to how people use organizational patterns to aid memory and interpretation; introducing the general structure of a CD word map, explaining how the three probes define a concept, and walking students through the completion of a word map; and applying CD to an actual text selection.

Two caveats are relevant to CD instruction: CD works best with concept words that function as nouns, but the procedure may be used, with some adaptation, with action words as well. Also, a potential misuse of CD occurs when teachers reproduce the general CD word map on the copier and expect students

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**FIGURE 4.3 CD Map for the Word Tiger**

![CD Map for the Word Tiger](image-url)
to define lists of words at the end of a text chapter. This is not the intent of CD instruction. Instead, students should internalize the process through demonstration and actual use, applying it as they need it in actual text learning. Ultimately, the goal of CD instruction is to have students own the strategy of defining unknown words in terms of category, property, and example relationships.

**Vocabulary-Building Strategies**

Showing diverse learners how to construct meaning for unfamiliar words encountered during reading helps them develop strategies needed to monitor comprehension and increase their own vocabularies. Demonstrating how to use context, word structure, and the dictionary provides students with several basic strategies for vocabulary learning that will last a lifetime. With these strategies, students can search for information clues while reading so that they can approximate the meanings of unknown words. These clues often reveal enough meaning to allow readers who struggle with text to continue reading without “short-circuiting” the process and giving up because the text does not make sense.

You can scaffold the use of vocabulary-building strategies before assigning material to be read. If one or more words represent key concepts—and the words lend themselves to demonstration—you can model the inquiry process necessary to construct meaning. The demonstration is brief, often lasting no more than five minutes. There are three types of demonstrations that will make students aware of vocabulary-building strategies. The first is to model how to make sense of a word in the context of its use, the second involves an analysis of a word’s structure, and the third combines context and word structure. Usually these demonstrations require the use of visuals, such as an overhead transparency or a chalkboard. After the brief demonstration, guide students to practice and apply the strategy that you just modeled so that they can become proficient in its use.

**Using Context to Approximate Meaning**

Constructing meaning from context is one of the most useful strategies at the command of proficient readers. Showing readers who struggle how to make use of context builds confidence and competence and teaches the inquiry process necessary to unlock the meaning of troublesome technical and general vocabulary encountered during reading. Using context involves using information surrounding a difficult word to help reveal its meaning. Every reader makes some use of context automatically. Strategy instruction, however, is needed when the text provides a *deliberate context* to help the reader with concept terms that are especially difficult. Often the text author will anticipate that certain words will be troublesome and will provide information clues and contextual aids to help readers with meaning. In these instances, students will benefit from a strategy that allows them to use the deliberate context to construct meaning.
Even though textbook authors may consciously or unconsciously use deliberate contexts for unknown words, constraints in the material itself or the reader's own background limit the degree to which context reveals word meaning. The teacher and students must know how context operates to limit meaning as well as to reveal it.

Deighton (1970) identified several factors that limit the use of context: (1) What a context may reveal to a particular reader depends on the reader's experience, (2) the portion of context that reveals an unfamiliar word must be located reasonably close to the word if it is to act effectively, and (3) there must be some clear-cut connection between the unfamiliar term and the context that clarifies it.

The use of context, as you have probably concluded, is mostly a matter of inference. Inference requires readers to see an explicit or implicit relationship between the unfamiliar word and its context or to connect what they know already with the unknown term. It can't be assumed that students will perceive these relationships or make the connections on their own. Most students who struggle with text simply don't know how to use a deliberate context provided by an author. Three kinds of information in particular are useful to struggling readers: typographic, syntactic, and semantic clues.

**TYPOGRAPHIC CLUES** Typographic or format clues make use of footnotes, italics, boldface print, parenthetical definitions, pictures, graphs, charts, and the like. A typographic clue provides a clear-cut connection and a direct reference to an unknown word. Many students tend to gloss over a typographic aid instead of using it to spotlight the meaning of a difficult term. The teacher can rivet attention to these aids with minimal expenditure of class time.

For example, consider the way a science teacher modeled a strategy for revealing the meaning of the word *enzymes*, which was presented in boldface type in the text. Before assigning a text section titled “Osmosis in Living Cells,” the teacher asked students to turn to page 241. Then he asked, “Which word in the section on osmosis stands out among the others?” The students quickly spotted the word *enzymes*. “Why do you think this word is highlighted in boldface type?” he asked. A student replied, “I guess it must be important.” Another student said, “Maybe because it has something to do with osmosis—whatever that is.” The teacher nodded approvingly and then asked the class to see if they could figure out what *enzymes* meant by reading this sentence: “Chemical substances called *enzymes* are produced by cells to break down large starch molecules into small sugar molecules.”

The science teacher continued the demonstration by asking two questions: “What are enzymes?” and “What do they do?” The students responded easily. The teacher concluded the walk-through with these words: “Words that are put in large letters or boldfaced print are important. If you pay attention to them as we just did, you will have little trouble figuring out what they mean. There are four other words in boldfaced type in your reading assignment. Look for them as you read and try to figure out what they mean.”
Syntactic and semantic clues in content materials should not be treated separately. The grammatical relationships among words in a sentence or the structural arrangement among sentences in a passage often helps clarify the meaning of a particular word.

Syntactic and semantic clues are much more subtle than typographic clues. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the most frequently encountered syntactic and semantic clues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Clue</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Examplesa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Definition</td>
<td>The author equates the unknown word to the known or more familiar, usually using a form of the verb be.</td>
<td><em>Entomology</em> is the study of insects, and biologists who specialize in this field are called <em>entomologists.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Linked synonyms</td>
<td>The author pairs the unknown word with familiar synonyms or closely related words in a series.</td>
<td><em>A critical review</em> is an attempt to evaluate the worth of a piece of writing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Direct description: examples, modifiers, restatements</td>
<td>The author reveals the meaning of an unknown word by providing additional information in the form of appositives, phrases, clauses, or sentences.</td>
<td><em>Kunte Kinte</em> was the victim of <em>cruel,</em> <em>evil,</em> <em>malevolent,</em> and <em>brutal</em> slave traders.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>The senator from Connecticut possessed the traits of an honest and just leader: <em>wisdom,</em> <em>judgment,</em> <em>sagacity.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Example clue:</em> Undigested material such as <em>fruit skins,</em> <em>outer parts of grain,</em> and the stringlike parts of some <em>vegetables</em> forms <em>roughage.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Modifier clues:</em> <em>Pictographic writing,</em> which was the actual drawing of animals, people, and events, is the forerunner of written language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Algae,</em> nonvascular plants that are as abundant in water as <em>grasses are on land,</em> have often been called “<em>grasses of many waters.</em>”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Restatement clue:</em> A billion dollars a year is spent on health quackery. <em>In other words,</em> each year in the United States, millions of dollars are spent on worthless treatments and useless gadgets to “<em>cure</em>” various illnesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*aItalics denote the unknown words. Boldface type represents information clues that trigger context revelation.*

**SYNTACTIC AND SEMANTIC CLUES**

Syntactic and semantic clues in content materials should not be treated separately. The grammatical relationships among words in a sentence or the structural arrangement among sentences in a passage often helps clarify the meaning of a particular word.

Syntactic and semantic clues are much more subtle than typographic clues. Table 4.2 presents a summary of the most frequently encountered syntactic and semantic clues.
The chalkboard or an overhead transparency is valuable for helping students visualize the inquiry process necessary to reveal meaning. For example, if a definition clue is used, as in this example from Table 4.2: “Entomology is the study of insects, and biologists who specialize in this field are called entomologists,” it may be appropriate first to write the sentence on the board. During the modeling discussion, you can then show how is and are called provide information clues that reveal meaning for entomology and entomologists. A simple strategy
would be to cross out *is* and *are called* in the sentence and replace them with equal signs (=):

Entomology *is* = the study of insects, and biologists who specialize in this field *are called* = entomologists.

A brief discussion will reinforce the function of the verb forms *is* and *are called* in the sentence.

The definition clue is the least subtle of the syntactic and semantic clues. However, all the clues in Table 4.2 require students to make inferential leaps. Consider one of the examples from the mood and tone clue: “The tormented animal screeched with horror and writhed in pain as it tried desperately to escape from the hunter’s trap.” Suppose this sentence came from a short story about to be assigned in an English class. Assume also that many of the students would have trouble with the word *tormented* as it is used in the sentence. If students are to make the connection between *tormented* and the mood created by the information clues, the teacher will have to ask several effective clarifying questions.

The demonstration begins with the teacher writing the word *tormented* on the board. She asks, “You may have heard or read this word before, but how many of you think that you know what it means?” Student definitions are put on the board. The teacher then writes the sentence on the board. “Which of the definitions on the board do you think best fits the word *tormented* when it’s used in this sentence?” She encourages students to support their choices. If none fits, she will ask for more definitions now that students have seen the sentence. She continues questioning, “Are there any other words or phrases in the sentence that help us get a feel for the meaning of *tormented*? Which ones?”

The inquiry into the meaning of *tormented* continues in this fashion. The information clues (*screeched with horror, writhed in pain, desperately*) that establish the mood are underlined and discussed. The teacher concludes the modeling activity by writing five new words on the board and explaining, “These words are also in the story that you are about to read. As you come across them, stop and think. How do the words or phrases or sentences surrounding each word create a certain feeling or mood that will allow you to understand what each one means?”

When modeling the use of context in Table 4.2, it’s important for students to discover the information clues. It’s also important for the teacher to relate the demonstration to several additional words to be encountered in the assignment. Instruction of this type will have a significant cumulative effect. If students are shown how to use contextual clues for two or three words each week, over the course of an academic year they will have 80 to 120 applications in the process.

**Cognate Relationships and Context**

Whenever the opportunity presents itself, it’s important to help students recognize and use the relationship between *cognates* and the context in which they are used. Cognates are words that are culturally and linguistically related in both the
nonnative speaker’s language and in English. As part of cognitive strategy instruction for struggling readers, Latina/o students in a middle school special education classroom were shown how to approximate word meaning through the cognate relationships they encountered in the texts that they were reading. The researchers used a “think-aloud” strategy, as discussed in the previous chapter, to scaffold instruction (Jimenez & Gamez 1996, p. 88):

**Researcher:** You know the word in Spanish, so we can use a Spanish clue to help us figure out what it means. Victor, what does *espectacular* mean?

**Victor:** That it’s useful?

**Researcher:** It’s something very . . .

**Sara:** Special?

**Researcher:** Special, you got it! I like this. So (for) something very special, you can say wonderful, *maravilloso*. The Spanish clue helped us with *espectacular* because that is exactly the same in English and Spanish. Have you guys heard that word on the radio, *espectacular*? (The researcher writes this on the chalkboard.) That’s English, and here’s Spanish *espectacular*. The only difference between English and Spanish is that we put an e in the front in Spanish. That’s exactly the same word. It almost sounds exactly the same, only a little bit different. But when you guys can do this you’re taking advantage of your bilingualism and you’re using what you already know to help you understand. OK? I think it’s really cool when Latino kids do that. That makes a lot of sense to me.

In addition to emphasizing cognate-related vocabulary building, showing linguistically diverse learners how to approximate word meaning through word structure and context is another important aspect of vocabulary building.

**Word Structure**

A word itself provides information clues about its meaning. The smallest unit of meaning in a word is called a *morpheme*. Analyzing a word’s structure, *morphemic analysis*, is a second vocabulary-building strategy that students can use to predict meaning. When readers encounter an unknown word, they can reduce the number of feasible guesses about its meaning considerably by approaching the whole word and identifying its parts. When students use morphemic analysis in combination with context, they have a powerful strategy at their command.

Student readers often find long words daunting. Olsen and Ames (1972) put long or polysyllabic words into four categories:

1. **Compound words made up of two known words joined together.** Examples: *commonwealth, matchmaker*.

2. **Words containing a recognizable stem to which an affix (a prefix, combining form, or suffix) has been added.** Examples: *surmountable, deoxygenize, unsystematic, microscope.*
3. Words that can be analyzed into familiar and regular pronounceable units. Examples: undulate, calcify, subterfuge, strangulate.

4. Words that contain irregular pronounceable units so that there is no sure pronunciation unless one consults a dictionary. Examples: louver, indictment.

Content vocabulary terms from categories 1 and 2 (compound words and recognizable stems and affixes) are the best candidates for instruction. You can readily demonstrate techniques for predicting the meanings of these words because each of their isolated parts will always represent a meaning unit.

In some instances, a word from category 3 may also be selected for emphasis. However, there is no guarantee that students will bring prior knowledge and experience to words that comprise the third category. Long phonemically regular words lend themselves to syllabication. Syllabication involves breaking words into pronounceable sound units or syllables. The word undulate, for example, can be syllabicated (un-du-late). However, the syllable un is not a meaning-bearing prefix.

Many words from category 3 are derived from Latin or Greek. Students who struggle with texts will find these words especially difficult to analyze for meaning because of their lack of familiarity with Latin or Greek roots. Occasionally, a word such as strangulate (derived from the Latin strangulatus) can be taught because students may recognize the familiar word strangle. They might then be shown how to link strangle to the verb suffix -ate (which means “to cause to become”) to hypothesize a meaning for strangulate. Unfortunately, the verb suffix -ate has multiple meanings, and the teacher should be quick to point this out to students. This procedure is shaky, but it has some payoff.

Words from category 2 warrant instruction, because English root words are more recognizable, obviously, than Latin or Greek ones. Whenever feasible, teach the principles of structural word analysis using terms that have English roots. Certain affixes are more helpful than others, and knowing which affixes to emphasize during instruction will minimize students’ confusion.

The most helpful affixes are the combining forms, prefixes, or suffixes that have single, invariant meanings. Deighton’s (1970) monumental study of word structure has helped identify affixes that have single meanings. (See Appendix A for a summary of Deighton’s findings.)

Many other commonly used prefixes have more than one meaning or have several shades of meaning. Because of their widespread use in content terminology, you should also consider these variant-meaning prefixes for functional teaching. (See Appendix B for a list of prefixes with varying meanings.)

The tables of affixes are resources for you. Don’t be misled into thinking that students should learn long lists of affixes in isolation to help in analyzing word structure. This approach is neither practical nor functional. We recommend instead that students be taught affixes as they are needed to analyze the structure of terms that will appear in a reading assignment.

For example, an English teacher modeled how to analyze the meaning of pandemonium before students were to encounter the term in an assignment from One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest. She wrote the word on the board—pandemonium—
underlining the English base word *demon*, and asked students for several synonyms for the word. Student responses included *witch, devil, monster*, and *wicked people*.

Then she explained that *-ium* was a noun suffix meaning “a place of.” “Now let’s take a look at *pan*. Sheila, have you ever heard of the Pan American Games? They are similar to the Olympics, but what do you think is a major difference between the Olympics and the Pan American Games?” Sheila and several students responded to the question. A brief discussion led the students to conclude the Pan American Games, like the Olympics, are a series of athletic contests; however, unlike the Olympics, only countries in North, Central, and South America and the Caribbean participate in the Pan American Games. The teacher affirmed the students’ conclusions and noted that Pan American means quite literally, “all the Americas.” Further discussion centered around the word *panoramic*. Through this process, relating the known to the unknown, students decided that *pan* meant “all.”

“Now, back to *pandemonium*. ‘A place of all the demons.’ What would this place be like?” Students were quick to respond. The demonstration was completed with two additional points. The teacher asked the class to find the place in *One Flew over the Cuckoo’s Nest* where *pandemonium* was used and read the paragraph. Then she asked them to refine their predictions of the meaning of *pandemonium*. Next the teacher discussed the origin of the word—which the English poet John Milton coined in his epic poem *Paradise Lost*. Pandemonium was the capital of hell, the place where all the demons and devils congregated—figuratively speaking, where “all hell broke loose.”

**Using the Dictionary as a Strategic Resource**

The use of context and word structure are strategies that give struggling readers insight into the meanings of unknown words. Rarely does context or word structure help learners derive precise definitions for keywords. Instead, these vocabulary-building strategies keep readers on the right track so that they are able to follow a text without getting bogged down or giving up.

There are times, however, when context and word structure reveal little about a word’s meaning. In these instances, or when a precise definition is needed, a dictionary is a logical alternative and a valuable resource for students.

Knowing when to use a dictionary is as important as knowing how to use it. A content teacher should incorporate dictionary usage into ongoing plans but should avoid a very common pitfall in the process of doing so. When asked, “What does this word mean?” the teacher shouldn’t automatically reply, “Look it up in the dictionary.”

To some students, “Look it up in the dictionary” is another way of saying “Don’t bug me” or “I really don’t have the time or the inclination to help you.” Of course, this may not be the case at all. However, from an instructional perspective, that hard-to-come-by teachable moment is lost whenever we routinely suggest to students to look up a word in the dictionary.

One way to make the dictionary a functional resource is to use it to verify educated guesses about word meaning revealed through context or word structure.
For example, if a student asks you for the meaning of a vocabulary term, an effective tactic is to bounce the question right back: “What do you think it means? Let’s look at the way it’s used. Are there any clues to its meaning?” If students are satisfied with an educated guess because it makes sense, the word need not be looked up. But if students are still unsure of the word’s meaning, the dictionary is there.

When students go into a dictionary to verify or to determine a precise definition, more often than not they need supervision to make good decisions. Keep these tips in mind as you work on dictionary usage.

1. **Help students determine the “best fit” between a word and its definition.** Students must often choose the most appropriate definition from several. This poses a real dilemma for young learners. Your interactions will help them make the best choice of a definition and will provide a behavior model for making such a choice.

2. **If you do assign a list of words to look up in a dictionary, choose them selectively.** A few words are better than many. The chances are greater that students will learn several key terms thoroughly than that they will develop vague notions about many.

3. **Help students with the pronunciation key in a glossary or dictionary as the need arises.** This does not mean, however, that you will teach skills associated with the use of a pronunciation key in isolated lessons. Instead, it means guiding and reinforcing students’ abilities to use a pronunciation key as they study the content of your course.

Vocabulary development is a gradual process, “the result of many encounters with a word towards a more precise grasp of the concept the word represents” (Parry 1993, p. 127). If this is the case, students who struggle with demanding text material will benefit from vocabulary-building strategies that make use of context clues, word structure, and appropriate uses of reference tools such as the dictionary. Johnson and Steele (1996) found that with English language learners, the use of *personal word lists* provided excellent strategy practice and application in the use of vocabulary-building strategies.

The use of personal word lists would be of value not only to English language-minority students but also to all students who need explicit support in the use of vocabulary-building strategies. The personal word list technique emphasizes the need for students to self-select important concept words and incorporates key principles learned from the VSS strategy discussed earlier in the chapter. Students then complete a personal word list, which may be part of a vocabulary notebook or learning log. The personal word list is divided into four columns as illustrated in Figure 4.4. For each word entry, students list (1) the word, (2) what the word means, (3) the clues used to construct meaning for the word (context, word structure, or a combination of the two), and (4) a dictionary definition, when it is appropriate to consult the dictionary for a definition. Figure 4.4 illustrates an English language learner’s personal word list entries (Johnson & Steele 1996).
Comprehension Strategies

In Chapter 3, we discussed question–answer relationships (QARs) and reciprocal teaching as two research-based comprehension strategies used to show learners how to generate and answer questions (NRP 2000; Pearson & Duke 2001). In this

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**Figure 4.4** An English Language Learner’s Personal Word List

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>What I Think It Means</th>
<th>Clues (context or structure)</th>
<th>Dictionary Definition (if needed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sacred</td>
<td>religious</td>
<td>they were entering a sacred building that loomed out of the night to give them what haven and what blessing they yearned for.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vexation</td>
<td>displeasure</td>
<td>but something would come up some vexation that was like a fly buzzing around their heads.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lurch</td>
<td>movement</td>
<td>she took a step toward the porch lurching</td>
<td>a sudden movement forward or sideways</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

section, we extend our discussion of comprehension strategies by exploring two additional research-based practices that are integral parts of strategy instruction for students who might struggle with texts in content literacy situations: Questioning the author (QtA) and the directed reading–thinking activity (DR–TA). Both of these comprehension strategies involve students in a process of asking and answering questions about a text, making inferences, and thinking critically. Because QtA and DR–TA are highly interactive strategies that rely on active engagement and student talk, we recommend them for use in sheltered classrooms.

**Questioning the Author (QtA)**

Questioning the author (QtA) is a comprehension strategy that models for students the importance of asking questions while reading. Beck, McKeown, Hamilton, and Kucan (1997) devised the QtA strategy to demonstrate the kinds of questions students need to ask in order to think more deeply and construct meaning about segments of text as they read. Good readers act on the author’s message. If what they are reading doesn’t make sense to them, they generate questions about what the author says and means. When students struggle with text, however, they often do not have a clue about generating questions, let alone interacting with the author of text. Enter QtA instruction.

The QtA strategy shows students how to read text closely as if the author were there to be challenged and questioned. QtA places value on the quality and depth of students’ responses to the author’s intent. It is important that students keep their minds active while reading as they engage in a dialogue with an author. Good readers monitor whether the author is making sense by asking questions such as, “What is the author trying to say here?” “What does the author mean?” “So what? What is the significance of the author’s message?” “Does this make sense with what the author told us before?” “Does the author explain this clearly?” These questions, according to Beck and colleagues (1997), are posed by the teacher to help students “take on” the author and understand that text material needs to be challenged.

Through QtA, students learn that authors are fallible and may not always express ideas in the easiest way for readers to understand. QtA builds metacognitive knowledge by making students aware of an important principle related to reading comprehension: *Not comprehending what the author is trying to say is not always the fault of the reader.* As a result, students come to view their roles as readers as “grappling with text” as they seek to make sense of the author’s intent.

**Planning a QtA Lesson**

Planning QtA lessons for narrative or informational texts involves a three-stage process that requires the teacher to (1) identify major understandings and potential problems with a text prior to its use in class, (2) segment the text into logical stopping points for discussion, and (3) develop questions, or queries, that model and demonstrate how to “question the author.” Box 4.2 examines the planning process.
RESEARCH-BASED BEST PRACTICES

Steps in a QtA Lesson

1. Analyze the text
   - Identify major understandings and potential problems that students may encounter during reading.
   - Read the text closely and note the author’s intent, the major ideas and themes, and any areas or potential obstacles in the material that could affect comprehension.
   - Reflect on your own comprehension as you read the text. Note any passages that you reread or pause to think about, knowing that these sections will most likely be problematic for students.

2. Segment the text
   - Determine where to stop the reading to initiate and develop discussion. The text segments may not always fall at a page or paragraph break. You may want to stop reading after one sentence to ask a question.

3. Develop questions
   - Plan questions that will help students respond to what the author says and means. These generic questions prompt students’ responses to the text and encourage them to dig deeper and make sense of what they are reading. The following question guide will help you frame initiating and follow-up questions at different points in the lesson. Initiating questions at the beginning of the reading draw students’ attention to the author’s intent, whereas follow-up queries focus the direction of the discussion and assist students as they integrate and connect ideas. Follow-up questions help students determine why the author included certain ideas.

QtA QUESTION GUIDE

Initial questions at the beginning of the lesson:
   - What is the author trying to say?
   - What is the author’s message?
   - What is the author talking about?

Follow-up questions during reading help students make connections and inferences about the text:
   - This is what the author says, but what does it mean?
   - How does this text segment connect with what the author has already said?

Follow-up questions during reading help students with difficulties and confusions with the way the author presents information:
   - Does the author make sense here?
   - Did the author explain this clearly?
   - What’s missing? What do we need to find out?

Follow-up questions during reading clarify misinterpretations or make students aware that they made an inference (reinforce QARs):
   - Did the author tell us that?
   - Did the author say that or did you “think and search” to get the answer?
When using QtA to comprehend stories, pose narrative queries. Through the use of narrative queries, students become familiar with an author’s writing style as they strive to understand character, plot, and underlying story meaning. The following queries help students think about story characters: “How do things look for this character now?” “Given what the author has already told us about this character, what do you think the author is up to?” Understanding the story plot can be accomplished with queries such as these: “How has the author let you know that something has changed?” “How has the author settled this for us?”

**Guiding the QtA Discussion**

Beck and colleagues (1997) recommend the use of a variety of “discussion moves” to guide students:

- **Marking:** Draw attention to certain ideas by either paraphrasing what a student said or by acknowledging its importance with statements such as “Good idea” or “That’s an important observation.”
- **Turning back:** Make students responsible for figuring out ideas and turning back to the text for clarification.
- **Revoicing:** Assist students as they express their ideas; filter the most important information and help students who are struggling to express their ideas by rephrasing their statements.
- **Modeling:** Think aloud about an issue that is particularly difficult to understand, one that students are unable to reach without assistance.
- **Annotating:** Provide information that is not in the text so that students can understand the concepts fully.
- **Recapping:** Summarize the main ideas as a signal to move on in the lesson. Recapping can be done by either the teacher or the students.

The thoughtful use of questions is vital for classroom discussion. As learners actively explore and clarify meaning, guide the discussion as you progress from one text segment to the next. Another research-based comprehension strategy also centers around the use of segmented text while modeling comprehension processes. It is called the directed reading–thinking activity (DR–TA).

**Directed Reading–Thinking Activity (DR–TA)**

The DR–TA fosters critical awareness and thinking by engaging learners in a process that involves prediction, verification, interpretation, and judgment. Much like the QIA, the teacher guides the reading and stimulates thinking through the frequent use of open-ended questions such as “What do you think?” “Why do you think so?” “Can you prove it?” The learning environment for a DR–TA lesson is critical to its success as an instructional practice. The teacher must be support-
ive and encouraging so as not to inhibit students’ participation in the activity. As a rule, avoid inhibiting participation by refuting students’ predictions. Wait time is also important. When posing an open-ended question, it is not unusual to pause for two, three, five, or even ten seconds for students to respond. Too often, the tendency is to slice the original question into smaller parts. Sometimes a teacher starts slicing too quickly out of a sense of frustration or anxiety rather than because of students’ inability to respond. Silence may very well be an indication that hypothesis formation or other cognitive activities are taking place in the students’ heads. So wait—and see what happens.

To prepare for a DR–TA with an informational text, analyze the material for its superordinate and subordinate concepts. What are the relevant concepts, ideas, relationships, and information in the material? The content analysis will help you decide on logical stopping points as you direct students through the reading.

For short stories and other narrative material, determine the key elements of the story: the setting (time and place, major characters) and the events in the plot (the initiating events or problem-generating situation, the protagonist’s reaction to the event and his or her goal to resolve the problem, the set of attempts to achieve the goal, outcomes related to the protagonist’s attempts to achieve the goal and resolve the problem, the character’s reaction).

Once these elements have been identified, the teacher has a framework for deciding on logical stopping points within the story. In Figure 4.5, we indicate a general plan that may be followed or adapted for specific story lines. Notice that the suggested stopping points come at key junctures in a causal chain of events in the story line. Each juncture suggests a logical stopping point in that it assumes that the reader has enough information from at least one preceding event to predict a future happening or event. Box 4.3 outlines steps in a DR–TA lesson for narrative and informational texts.

**FIGURE 4.5** Potential Stopping Points in a DR–TA for a Story Line with One Episode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>STOP</th>
<th>STOP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Setting, introduction of characters, initiating event</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main character’s response to initiating event</strong></td>
<td><strong>Attempts made to alleviate problem and achieve goal</strong></td>
<td><strong>Outcomes or consequences of attempts, resolution of problem</strong></td>
<td><strong>Main character’s reaction to events</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In an eighth-grade science class, students were engaged in a study of a textbook chapter about the light spectrum (Davidson & Wilkerson 1988). Using a DR–TA framework, the teacher guided the students’ interactions with the text material. Study an excerpt of the transcript from the beginning cycle of the DR–TA in Figure 4.6.

As you examine the transcript, note that teacher–student interactions are recorded in the left column of the box. The teacher’s questions and comments are
d. A poll can be taken to intensify the predictive process, and a debate may naturally ensue. Additional proof may be needed from available reference books.

2. Adjust the rate to the purposes and the material. The teacher should adjust the amount of reading, depending on the purposes, nature, and difficulty of the reading material; skimming, scanning, and studying are involved. Students are told, "Read to find out if your predictions were correct." The reading task may be several pages, a few passages, or some other amount of the text. If the teacher designates numerous stopping points within the reading task, the same procedures as noted in step 1 should be executed at each stopping point.

3. Observe the reading. The teacher observes the reading by assisting students who request help and noting abilities to adjust rate to purpose and material, to comprehend material, and to use word recognition strategies.

4. Guide reader–text interactions. Students check the purposes by accepting, rejecting, or redefining them. This can be accomplished during discussion time after students have read a predetermined number of pages or by encouraging students to rework their predictions as they read, noting their revised predictions and hypotheses.

5. Extend learning through discussion, further reading, additional study, or writing. Students and teacher identify these needs throughout the strategy.

   a. After reading, students should be asked (1) if their predictions were inaccurate, (2) if they needed to revise or reject any predictions as they read, (3) how they knew revision was necessary, and (4) what their new predictions were.

   b. Discussion in small groups is most useful in this step. A recorder, appointed by the group, can share the groups' reading–thinking processes with the whole class. These should be compared with original predictions.

   c. The teacher should ask open-ended questions that encourage generalization and application relevant to students' predictions and the significant concepts presented. In any follow-up discussion or questioning, proof should always be required: "How do you know that? Why did you think so? What made you think that way?" Encourage students to share passages, sentences, and so on for further proof (Homer 1979).
Once the purposes were established, the teacher assigned a section of the text chapter to be read. According to Davidson and Wilkerson (1988), two observers of the lesson:

When students read the portion of the text they were directed to read, they read that infrared waves are invisible and that they are heat waves. Discussion, involving text ideas, students’ previous ideas, and their reasoning abilities, showed that they dis-

### Excerpt of a DR–TA Transcript from a Science Lesson on the Light Spectrum

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher-Student Interactions</th>
<th>Analysis of Lesson</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FIGURE 4.6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Excerpt of a DR–TA Transcript from a Science Lesson on the Light Spectrum</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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**Teacher-Student Interactions**

I'D LIKE FOR YOU TO BEGIN BY JUST READING THIS ACTIVITY IN THIS SECTION. THEN TELL ME WHAT YOU EXPECT TO FIND IN THIS PASSAGE. YOU KNOW IT'S ABOUT LIGHT AND COLOR AND SPECTRUMS. WHAT ELSE DO YOU EXPECT THAT YOU WILL FIND?

s: Heat

WHY DO YOU SAY HEAT?

s: Well, some of the colors are cooler.

DO YOU KNOW WHICH ONES WILL BE COOLER?

s: I think the darker ones.

WHY DO YOU SAY THAT?

s: They look cooler.

THEY LOOK COOLER? OKAY.

WHAT ELSE? DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE?

s: Well, I agree with her on infrared and ultraviolet. They are probably the hottest colors you can get of the spectrum.

ALL RIGHT. ANYBODY ELSE?

---

**Analysis of Lesson**

The teacher directs students to read a description of an activity designed to produce a sun’s spectrum with a prism. The activity includes holding a thermometer in the spectrum produced, placing a fluorite substance near the spectrum, and anticipating changes.

The student’s response is based on prior knowledge which she judges will be relevant.

The teacher encourages the student to extend the response.

Teacher asks for justification.

Teacher accepts response, recognizing that the student has, in fact, generated a question to be answered in reading the text.

The teacher encourages other students to analyze this hypothesis or generate a different one.

Teacher accepts response, recognizing that the student has, in fact, generated a question to be answered in reading the text.

The student’s response shows that he is evaluating the other student’s response. Also, he uses specific vocabulary from his prior knowledge to extend the prediction.

The teacher does not make a judgment about the validity of the predictions since that is the responsibility of the students as they read and discuss.
**Teacher–Student Interactions**

s: I think he is wrong.

WHY?

s: Because whenever you melt steel, steel always turns red before it turns white. When it turns white, it melts completely.

OKAY.

s: You can’t see infrared.

AND HOW WOULD THAT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN WHAT HE JUST SAID?

s: Well, he just said that it turned red before it turned white. And you can’t see white, it’s just a shade. Infrared you can’t see—which would be just like sunlight. You can’t see sunlight. So, I think it would be hotter.

YOU THINK IT WOULD BE HOTTER?

OKAY.

ANYBODY ELSE?

WELL, LET ME GIVE YOU THIS WHOLE FIRST PARAGRAPH. I WANT YOU TO READ TO THE BOTTOM OF THE PAGE AND THEN I WANT YOU TO GO TO THE TOP OF THE NEXT PAGE. IT WILL BE THE VERY TOP PARAGRAPH. COVER UP WHAT’S BELOW IT WITH YOUR PAPER. READ THAT FAR AND THEN STOP.

(Students read silently.)

**Analysis of Lesson**

A student disagrees.

Teacher asks for justification.

The student analyzes the prior student’s prediction and explains in terms of his own experience.

As stated, the student’s response is a literal statement.

The teacher assumes that there is a connection with the discussion and asks for explanation.

In his extended response the student disagrees with the prior student’s conclusion and explanation and uses an illustration from his prior knowledge which he feels is relevant to “prove” his point.

The teacher does not point out the validity or lack of validity of either student’s logic. She recognizes that both students are thinking critically and that they and others in the group will read to find clues to justify the concepts they are hypothesizing. She is consistent in her role as a facilitator of student discussion.

---

covered that infrared light is not one of the hottest colors because it is not a color. They also discovered that infrared waves are hot, since they are heat waves. The text supplied literal information. The discussion facilitated concept development and critical thinking. (p. 37)

Although the students’ predictions were amiss in the initial cycle of questioning, the teacher chose not to evaluate or judge the predictions. She recognized
that as readers interact with the text, more often than not they are able to clarify their misconceptions for themselves.

Instructional practices such as the Q&A and DR–TA not only model comprehension strategies but also engage learners in meaningful talk and discussion. Teachers can make strong connections between content learning and literacy development when they link classroom talk to reading and writing. The predominant type of talk in content areas classrooms usually revolves around instructional routines known as recitations, in which students take turns answering questions with bits and pieces of information. In these turn-taking exchanges, the social context for learning is dominated by teacher talk with little opportunity for students to explore and clarify ideas. Discussions that emphasize student talk are an alternative to recitations.

Talking and Working Together

Talking is critical to the success of linguistically diverse learners in content area classrooms. Instructional routines that revolve around discussion provide the support that native and nonnative speakers need to engage in meaningful activities that involve talking and working together. Classroom talk, however, can easily become teacher dominated rather than student centered. When a teacher does most of the talking, asks mostly factual questions, and controls who takes turns answering questions, learners quickly perceive their roles as passive nonparticipants in the academic life of the classroom. Lou, a Chinese American student in a northern California high school, describes what it is like to be in classrooms where teachers dominate talk: “When a teacher runs the show, it’s just, just kind of up to him. He has like a lecture written out and, you know, point by point. . . . A teacher kind of intimidates the students. ‘Cause he’s up there, you know, talking, making these complicated points and, you know, [students] just taking notes or something” (Knoeller 1994, p. 578). Let’s take a closer look at the veracity of Lou’s words, the role that talk plays in diverse classrooms, and some alternatives to teacher-dominated classroom talk.

Scaffolding Student Talk

The talk that students engage in during class discussions supports content literacy and learning in powerful ways. As we showed in the previous chapter, talk shapes what students learn about their own reading processes. Metacognitive discussions, if you will, make students aware of reading strategies and how to use those strategies to learn with text. The modeling of strategies through think-alouds and other types of metacognitive talk reveals what otherwise would be the “secrets” of text comprehension to which only good readers have access.

Talk also helps students to explore and clarify concepts they encounter during reading. As Douglas Barnes (1995) explains, “The kinds of participation in the
classroom conversation that are supported and encouraged by a teacher signal to students what learning is required of them” (p. 2). At times, teachers unwittingly intimidate learners through the questions they ask. Samples (1977) likens questions to conversational acts of aggression when they put students on the spot. Do you recall ever being put on the spot by a question? In that interminable second or two between question and response, between pounding heart and short gasps for air, do you remember asking yourself, “What’s the right answer—the one this instructor expects?” When questions are used to foster a right-answer-only atmosphere in class, they will not focus thinking about what has been read, and they will not prompt the processes by which diverse learners construct knowledge. Instead, they make the response—the correct answer—the all-important concern.

When students are on the spot, they often resort to guessing what is inside the teacher’s head. One need only read Judy Blume’s devastating parody of a music teacher’s question to her class in Figure 4.7 to appreciate how nonproductive it is playing “Guess What’s in My Head.”

**Turn-Taking Instructional Routines**

Seeking right answers only, putting students on the spot, and reinforcing Guess What’s in My Head behavior are tied to what some consider the prevalent instructional model in U.S. schooling, turn taking (Duffy 1983). Turn taking occurs whenever the teacher asks a question or assigns a turn, the student responds, and the teacher gives feedback by correcting or reinforcing the response. Teachers often depend on turn taking to “discuss” the content of textbook assignments. Yet what results is hardly a discussion at all. During turn-taking routines, questions usually forestall or frustrate classroom talk. Question–answer exchanges are brief, usually three to five seconds in duration, sometimes less, sometimes more. Rather than to characterize these question–answer exchanges as discussion, it is more appropriate to view them as recitation.

The striking feature of recitation is that the teacher’s talk consists of questions. To illustrate this point, Dillon (1983, pp. 10–11) provides a transcript from a typical recitation conducted by a high school teacher of U.S. history:

**Teacher:** OK, so we’ve kind of covered leadership and some of the things that Washington brought with it. Why else did they win? Leadership is important, that’s one.

**Student:** France gave ’em help.

**Teacher:** OK, so France giving aid is an example of what? France is an example of it, obviously.

**Student:** Aid from allies.

**Teacher:** Aid from allies, very good. Were there any other allies who gave aid to us?

**Student:** Spain.

**Teacher:** Spain. Now, when you say aid, can you define that?

**Student:** Help.
Teacher: Define “help.” Spell it out for me.
Student: Assistance.
Teacher: Spell it out for me.
Student: They taught the men how to fight the right way.
Teacher: Who taught?
Student: The allies.
Teacher: Where? When?
Student: In the battlefield.
Teacher: In the battlefield?

In the preceding exchanges, the students take turns answering questions about the success of Washington’s revolutionary army. The eight question-answer exchanges lasted a little more than thirty seconds, or four to five seconds per exchange. Each student addressed a response to the teacher, not to other students. The nature of turn taking is such that it is verboten for another student to jump into the exchange unless first recognized by the teacher to take a turn.

In turn taking, as you can infer, certain rules accompany classroom talk. One was alluded to earlier: The teacher speaks in questions; the students speak in answers. And the form of their answers indicates another rule of turn taking: Give just enough information specified by the question to satisfy the teacher. No wonder question-answer exchanges are brief. Interestingly, as part of the exchange, students invariably address their responses to the teacher. The implicit rule is never to address other students because only the teacher gives feedback. Each respondent thus awaits his or her turn to answer further questions. Any attempts at conversation or discussion are stifled.

A teacher’s language and actions signal to students what their roles are to be within a lesson. Although recitation may serve legitimate educational purposes (quizzing, reviewing), it may negatively affect students’ cognitive, affective, and expressive processes. Given the rules that operate during turn taking, teachers may very well increase student passivity and dependence. Furthermore, turn taking leads to a limited construction of meaning with text. Because the pace of questions is often rapid, readers hardly have the time to think about or to clarify or explore their understanding of the text material. When we ask predominantly “quiz show” questions, students soon engage in fact finding rather than in thinking about the ideas the author communicates. The inherent danger to text learners is subtle but devastating: Mistaken signals may be telegraphed to students about what it means to comprehend text and what their role is as comprehenders. Finding bits and pieces of information becomes the end-all and be-all of reading.

Discussion as an Alternative to Turn Taking
Discussion allows teacher and students to renegotiate authority, or as Lou, the English language learner quoted earlier, put it, renegotiate who “runs the show.” Teachers lead, but do not dominate, classroom talk. The “show” belongs to both the teacher and the students. In discussion-centered classrooms, the burden of responsibility for learning shifts from the teacher’s shoulders to the students’. Scaffolding talk through discussions creates an environment where students have opportunities to participate more fully by talking more, and by sharing their understanding, interpretations, and perspectives related to the ideas and concepts...
under discussion. Each classroom is a community, and talk is at its heart. As John Barnitz (1994) explains, it is talk that “connects people, that enables them to negotiate meaning in a situation or from text, that enables a teacher to lead a class in new directions” (p. 586).

Lou’s English teacher, Joan Cone, teaches in a culturally diverse high school that reformed its tracking policies by opening up senior-level English classes to all students by self-selection (Knoeller 1994). Regardless of their academic history, students could choose to take college preparatory courses “and even AP classes.” Cone’s AP class, for example, was ethnically diverse, balanced in terms of gender and levels of achievement (Scholastic Assessment Test scores ranged from 750 to 1350). Given the broad range of student differences, Cone’s challenge was responding to diversity while maintaining the high standards of a rigorous AP class. She experimented with a variety of instructional strategies, including student-led discussions of literature.

Christian Knoeller (1994), who studied Cone’s class, notes that she allowed students to volunteer as discussion leaders. A discussion leader was responsible for raising questions and keeping the discussion moving. At times, when discussions got bogged down or students had to be coached into using the text to justify their interpretations, Cone would step into the discussion to get it back on track. But she did so as a participant rather than as an authority figure. The goal was to have students engage with the text and with one another. In Cone’s words:

Besides assisting students with understanding sophisticated text, talk can create a classroom atmosphere in which the most able reader and least able reader can collaborate in making meaning and can learn from each other by sharing their insights, experiences, questions, and interpretations. . . . The emphasis (during student-led discussions) was always on asking questions, looking back in the text for substantiation, trying out interpretations, coming to agreement or living with disagreement: students creating meaning together, students teaching each other. . . . A sense of community had been established. (Knoeller 1994, p. 574)

Whether student-led or teacher-led, a discussion has certain characteristics that distinguish it from a recitation. First, discussions represent an open exchange of ideas. Second, both students and teacher ask questions. Third, students are just as likely to talk to other students as they are to respond to the teacher. And fourth, students learn to use their texts to substantiate their responses and support their interpretations.

Discussion can best be described as conversational interactions between teacher and students as well as between students and other students. In teacher-led discussions, the teacher doesn’t ask questions over long stretches of time, although questions are used judiciously throughout most discussions. As a result, discussion signifies an exchange of ideas and active participation among all parties involved.

Asking questions, even those designed to get students to open up and share their understanding of text, doesn't always result in a good discussion or, for that
matter, a bad discussion; only nondiscussion whenever students do not make sense of what they are doing or what is happening. Students stand a better chance of participating in discussion when they have a clear sense of purpose, understand the discussion task, and are given explicit directions and clear explanations.

Different types of discussion have different purposes. Let’s explore some of these purposes and the types of discussion that are likely to unfold when students talk about what they have read.

**Purposes and Types of Discussions**

Many of the instructional strategies and alternatives in this book are necessarily tied to discussion of one kind or another. Discussion allows students to respond to text, build concepts, clarify meaning, explore issues, share perspectives, and refine thinking. But effective discussions don’t run by themselves. For a discussion to be successful, a teacher has to be willing to take a risk or two.

Whenever you initiate a discussion, its outcome is bound to be uncertain, especially if its purpose is to help students think critically and creatively about what they have read. Often a teacher abandons discussion for the safety of recitation, where the outcome is far more predictable. A text discussion, however, should be neither a quiz show nor, at the opposite end of the continuum, a bull session (Roby 1987). Yet, when discussions aren’t carefully planned, students often feel an aimlessness or become easily threatened by the teacher’s questions. Both being quizzed about text material and simply shooting the bull are apt to close doors on active text learning.

Different purposes for text discussion lead to the use of different types of discussions by content area teachers. *Guided discussions* and *reflective discussions* provide varying degrees of structure for students to talk about text as they interact with one another.

**Guided Discussion**

If your aim is to develop concepts, clarify meaning, and promote understanding, the most appropriate discussion may be *informational*. The main objective of an informational discussion is to help students grapple with issues and understand important concepts. When the discussion task is information centered, teachers use a *guided discussion*.

In a guided discussion, a teacher provides a moderate amount of scaffolding as he or she directs students to think about what they have read through the use of questions and/or teacher-developed guide material. Because the emphasis is on content understanding and clarification, it is important to recognize the central role of the teacher in a guided discussion. Your responsibilities lie in asking questions, in probing student responses because clarifications are needed to extend thinking, in encouraging student questions, and in providing information to keep the discussion on course. The potential problem, however, is domination of the
discussion. Alvermann, Dillon, and O’Brien (1988) caution that, when overused, this role “can result in a discussion that more nearly resembles a lecture and frequently may confuse students, especially if they have been encouraged to assume more active roles in discussion” (p. 31).

A guided discussion can easily take a reflective turn. When teachers consciously shift gears from guided discussion to reflective discussion, their roles in the discussion shift.

**Reflective Discussion**

A reflective discussion is different from a guided discussion in several respects. The purpose of a reflective discussion is to require students to engage in critical and creative thinking as they solve problems, clarify values, explore controversial issues, and form and defend positions. A reflective discussion, then, presumes that students have a solid understanding of the important concepts they are studying. Without a basic knowledge and understanding of the ideas or issues under discussion, students cannot support opinions, make judgments, or justify and defend positions.

The teacher’s role during a reflective discussion is that of participant. As a participant, you become a group member, so that you can contribute to the discussion by sharing ideas and expressing your own opinions: “Teachers can guide students to greater independence in learning by modelling different ways of responding and reacting to issues, commenting on others’ points of view, and applying critical reading strategies to difficult concepts in the textbooks” (Alvermann et al. 1988, p. 31).

**Creating an Environment for Discussion**

Discussion is one of the major process strategies in the content area classroom. Because many of the strategies in this text revolve around discussion of some sort, we offer several suggestions for creating an environment in which discussion takes place, whether in small groups or in the whole class.

**Support English Language Learners by Providing Comprehensible Input**

Support nonnative speakers in your classroom by showing sensitivity to their language needs. An important component of the SIOP model for sheltered instruction is to provide *comprehensible input* for English language learners (Echevarria & Graves 2003). Make content learning comprehensible by simplifying your language when giving directions, leading whole-class discussions, or facilitating small-group interactions. When talking to a class that includes English language learners, especially students at a beginning or intermediate level of language proficiency, it may be necessary to speak clearly and use a slightly slower speech rate.
than you normally would if you had native speakers only in your classroom. During discussions, it may also be necessary to repeat yourself, define new words in a meaningful context, or paraphrase when you use more sophisticated language than English language learners can understand. Providing comprehensible input also means being aware of your use of idiomatic expressions and limiting them when students find idiomatic expressions difficult to understand. Moreover, keep in mind that gestures and facial expressions help to dramatize what you are saying during discussion. Barton (1995) reminds teachers not only to simplify and clarify the language they use but also to check for understanding frequently throughout classroom conversations. As we explained earlier in the chapter, scaffold instruction during discussion by supporting students’ in their use of home languages and their own culturally acceptable conversational styles.

Arrange the Classroom to Facilitate Discussion

Arrange the room so that students can see each other and huddle in conversational groupings when they need to share ideas. A good way to determine how functional a classroom is for discussion is to select a discussion strategy that does not require continuous question asking. For example, in Chapter 9 we will see that brainstorming involves a good mixture of whole-class and small-group discussion. Students need to alternate their attention between the chalkboard (where the teacher or another student is writing down all the ideas offered within a specified time) and their small groups (where they might categorize the ideas) and back to the front of the room (for comparison of group categories and summarization). If students are able to participate in the various stages of brainstorming with a minimum of chair moving or other time-consuming movements, to see the board, and to converse with other students without undue disruption, the room arrangements are adequate or conducive to discussion.

Encourage Listening

Encourage a climate in which everyone is expected to be a good listener, including the teacher. Let each student speaker know that you are listening. As the teacher begins to talk less, students will talk more. Intervene to determine why some students are not listening to each other or to praise those who are unusually good role models for others. Accept all responses of students positively.

Try starting out with very small groups of no more than two or three students. Again, rather than use questions, have students react to a teacher-read statement (“Political primaries are a waste of time and money”). In the beginning, students may feel constrained to produce answers to questions to satisfy the teacher. A statement, however, serves as a possible answer and invites reaction and justification. Once a statement is given, set a timer or call time by your watch at two-minute intervals. During each interval, one student in the group may agree or disagree without interruption. After each group member has an opportunity to respond, the group summarizes all dialogue, and one person presents this summary to the class (Gold & Yellin 1982, pp. 550–552).
Establish a Goal for Discussion

Establish the meaning of the topic and the goal of the discussion: “Why are we talking about railroad routes and how do they relate to our unit on the Civil War?” Also, explain directions explicitly, and don’t assume that students will know what to do. Many of the content area reading strategies in this book involve some group discussion. Frequently, strategies progress from independent, written responses to sharing, to comparing those responses in small groups, and then to pooling small-group reactions in a whole-class discussion. Without the guidance of a teacher who is aware of this process, group discussion tends to disintegrate.

Focus the Discussion

Keep the focus of the discussion on the central topic or core question or problem to be solved. Teachers may begin discussions by asking a question about a perplexing situation or by establishing a problem to be solved. From time to time, it may be necessary to refocus attention on the topic by piggybacking on comments made by particular students: “Terry brought out an excellent point about the Underground Railroad in northern Ohio. Does anyone else want to talk about this?” During small-group discussions, one tactic that keeps groups on task is reminding them of the amount of time remaining in the discussion.

Keeping the focus is one purpose for which teachers may legitimately question to clarify the topic. They may also want to make sure that they understood a particular student’s comment: “Excuse me, would you repeat that?” Often, keeping the discussion focused will prevent the class from straying away from the task.

Avoid Squelching Discussion

Give students enough think time to reflect on possible answers before calling on someone or rephrasing your question. Moreover, try to avoid answering your own question. (One way to prevent yourself from doing this is to resist having a preset or “correct” answer in your own mind when you ask a question beyond a literal level of comprehension.) Do not interrupt students’ responses or permit others to interrupt students’ responses. Do, however, take a minute or two for you or a student to summarize and bring closure to a group discussion just as you would in any instructional strategy.

Both guided and reflective discussions may be conducted with the whole class or in small groups. A small-group discussion, whether guided or reflective, places the responsibility for learning squarely on students’ shoulders. Because of the potential value of collaborative student interactions, we underscore the invaluable contribution of cooperative learning in diverse classrooms.

Cooperative learning, as we explain in detail in Chapter 7, allows students to work together to pursue academic objectives. The goals of cooperative learning,
therefore, are to foster collaboration in a classroom context, to develop students’ self-esteem in the process of learning, to encourage the development of positive group relationships, and to enhance academic achievement (Johnson, Johnson, & Holubec, 1990). Small-group learning opportunities help diverse learners to contribute ideas to a discussion and take chances in the process. The students can try out ideas without worrying about being wrong or sounding dumb—a fear that often accompanies risk taking in a whole-class situation.

Looking Back

Changes in the racial and ethnic composition of our student population have been dramatic. Today’s classrooms are more linguistically and culturally diverse than they were in the 1960s. The linguistic, cultural, and achievement differences of students contribute to the complexities of classroom diversity. Students of diverse backgrounds (who may be distinguished by their ethnicity, social class, language, or achievement level) often struggle in classrooms. English language learners especially challenge teachers to look for and experiment with instructional strategies that will actively involve them in the life of the classroom. Sheltered instruction makes a difference in the academic and language development of English language learners.

Teachers reach diverse learners by scaffolding instruction in ways that support content literacy and learning. Throughout this book, we explore scaffolded instruction designed to help all students learn with texts. In this chapter, we concentrated on two aspects of classroom strategy instruction: vocabulary and comprehension.

Looking Forward

Not only are classrooms strategic but they are also interactive and collaborative. Talk is the heart of classroom learning. Scaffolding instruction that capitalizes on classroom conversations shapes what diverse students learn and signals to them what teachers value in their classroom community. Classroom talk about texts is effective in a collaborative environment where team learning is valued.

In the next chapter, we change our focus from learners to texts. If teachers are going to meet the academic, linguistic, and cultural needs of students, they need to reconsider the roles that textbooks play in classroom learning. How do teachers move beyond the use of textbooks to provide students with authentic reading experiences by using a variety of “real-world” texts? Literature is an alternative to textbook study. We argue that literature should be used interchangeably with textbooks to give students an intense involvement with subject matter. We explore not only the rationale for literature across the curriculum but also the wide array of text possibilities and the role that critical perspectives play in learning with literature.
Minds On

1. Picture a content area class of twenty-five students from very diverse backgrounds—different native languages, different ethnicities, and varying achievement levels. Describe some classroom strategies you might use to respond to individual differences while maintaining high standards of content literacy and learning.

2. According to the latest census projections, by the year 2020 one of two public school students will be from minority backgrounds. How do you believe this change will influence learning strategies in the classroom?

3. In some classes, teachers do most of the talking, and students recite one- or two-word answers. What learning strategies are denied to students in this type of classroom design? How can teachers share their knowledge with students and still avoid overlecturing?

4. Think of the concept of class discussion. Try to visualize in your mind an example of a prior classroom situation in which enjoyable, lively discussions occurred. Look closely at this scene, and jot down as many descriptive or sensory words as you can to paint this picture verbally. Now try to recall a prior classroom situation that was not conducive to meaningful or enjoyable class discussions. Follow the same recording procedure. Share your lists with other members of the group, and collaboratively define the components of effective and ineffective class discussions. Finally, ask each group to share its lists with the entire class.

5. Picture a content area class of twenty-five to thirty students (your choice of grade level and subject) from diverse backgrounds. Describe how you would use the QtA and DR–TA strategies while maintaining high standards of content literacy and learning.

Hands On

1. For fifteen minutes in a four-member small group, discuss the topic “how technology might transform popular sports by the year 2121.” After the discussion, reflect on how the unique background of each member of the group contributed to the views expressed. Did any of the following factors influence individual participation: background knowledge of sports or technology, past experience playing sports, individual understanding of sports language or technological applications, or personal definitions of “popular” sports? What parallels might you draw with classroom lessons in which students bring cultural and linguistic differences to the learning activities?

2. Come to class prepared to share a piece of your personal “fund of knowledge”—knowledge and information that your family has passed on—with your small group. For example, you might share a passed-on craft, a skill, a family hobby, or a recipe. How did this sharing “connect” you to the group and the group to your culture?
3. Select a short informational article in a magazine or book, and bring copies for each member of your group. Have each member of the group discuss the merits of one of the following instructional strategies: (1) guided discussion, (2) a directed reading–thinking activity (DR–TA), (3) questioning the author (QTA), and (4) a reflective discussion. If there are more than four members in your group, duplicate strategies as needed.

Using the same article, design a lesson around the strategy you have discussed and make copies to share with the members of the group. As you review the four different lessons prepared by your colleagues, what comparisons and contrasts can you make between these instructional strategies.

**eResources extra**

- Go to Chapter 4 of the Companion Website ([www.ablongman.com/vacca8e](http://www.ablongman.com/vacca8e)) and click on Activities to complete the following task:

  The following site is filled with ideas for engaging English language learners of all levels: [www.eslpartyland.com](http://www.eslpartyland.com). The site includes vocabulary development ideas, activities that use music, and more. Browse this site for engaging activities and adapt them to content area lessons.

- Go to the Companion Website ([www.ablongman.com/vacca8e](http://www.ablongman.com/vacca8e)) for suggested readings, interactive activities, multiple-choice questions, and additional Web links to help you learn more about culturally and linguistically diverse learners.

**Themes of the Times**

Extend your knowledge of the concepts discussed in this chapter by reading current and historical articles from the *New York Times*. Go to the Companion Website and click on eThemes of the Times.