

Book Reviews

This is an ongoing column featuring reviews of books and other materials for ESOL teachers and students. Please send submissions to the columns editor, Elizabeth Fonseca, at columns@idiom.nystesol.org

Joy L. Egbert and Gisela Ernst-Slavit. *Access to Academics: Planning Instruction for K-12 Classrooms with ELLs*. New York: Pearson, 2008.

by Jennifer Scully

With the transition of *Idiom* to an online publication rather than an “old-school” paper document, it is entirely appropriate for TESOL practitioners to look forward to the future. We are moving toward a construct in which our level of collaboration within TESOL, particularly K-12 settings, will undoubtedly only increase. Some of our content-area colleagues seem to think of TESOL as a mysterious art they could not (or would not) learn how to master. This text will help teachers of math, science, social studies, and English language arts unravel their conundrum of giving ELLs access to curricula that are becoming increasingly rigorous.

The text has three parts: “Understanding the Roles of Language,” “Components of Effective Lesson Design,” and “Designing Lessons for Academic Success.” Each chapter begins by identifying key issues related to a particular topic, and ends with exercises for readers for extension, reflection, and action. Of particular interest is Chapter 4, “Writing and Teaching to Language Objectives,” a skill that many new teachers struggle with, but must master in order to pass new practical teacher assessments like the edTPA. Also useful is Part 3, which is organized into four sections: “Unlocking the Language of Science,” “Unlocking the Language of Math,” “Unlocking the Language of English Language Arts,” and “Unlocking the Language of Social Studies,” each of which analyzes the vocabulary, grammatical features, and discourse inherent in each subject area.

While written for content-area teachers, trainers of pre-service and in-service ESL teachers might also use this text as the basis of professional development. Its only weakness is that, for graduate education courses, it might not be appropriate as the sole required text. It can, however, certainly be used as a reference for ESOL teachers concerned with how to effectively shelter content, thereby giving all ELLs access to content-area material. While the true reference for accomplishing this are the SIOP guides by Vogt, Echevarria, and Short (2013), this text complements the guides well, as it breaks down this process into small, discrete steps.

The individual chapters on instructional issues inherent in each content area—math, science, social studies, and English language arts—are wonderful. Throughout the book, examples across K-12 content areas clearly illustrate what teachers should do in order to scaffold and shelter content for students still developing their English language proficiency. It offers research-based, practical suggestions on how to design effective and engaging lesson plans, connect instruction to students’ lives, and assess tasks, lessons, and students. The text might serve as a text used with pre-service or in-service teachers.

As the authors write in the Preface, “. . . there is a clear lack of appropriate resources that *directly* address planning lessons for K-12 mainstream classrooms with diverse learners such as ELLs” (p. x). I would argue that this text is also useful for ESL teachers to view their own “magical powers,” to gain a perspective on their own knowledge. *Access to Academics shows us how* we can help our content-area colleagues bridge the gap between ELLs and content, thereby opening a world of possibility to them.

References

Echevarria, J., Vogt, M., & Short, D. (2013). *Making content comprehensible for English learners: The SIOP[®] Model* (4th ed.). The Center for Applied Linguistics.

<http://www.cal.org/siop/>

Jennifer Scully has been teaching ESL, working with English learners from kindergarten to college, since 1993, when she earned her M.A. in TESOL from Hunter College, CUNY. In 2007, she earned her doctorate in multilingual/multicultural studies from NYU; her research and publications focus on best practices in working with English language learners in various educational settings. She is a consultant and teacher trainer at several New York City colleges.

[<jscully1@nyc.rr.com>](mailto:jscully1@nyc.rr.com)