

**Second Language Acquisition
Theories, Instructional/Classroom
Strategies and Resources**

**Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL
(English Language Learning)
Programs**

May 20, 2003

Updated 7/14/2004

Definitions:

National Origin Minority Students (NOMS). Any students who speak a language other than English as his/her first or native language and *may or may not* be proficient in English.

Our district (2002-2003) has identified 61 National Origin Minority Students (NOMS). These students spoke Spanish, Chinese, Korean, Russian and Bulgarian. About 37 of our NOM students have received services this year in one form or another.

Limited English Proficient Students (LEP). Any student whose primary language is other than English *AND* who is insufficiently proficient in English to receive instruction exclusively from regular education programs and function on an academic par with his/her peers.

Legal Issues and Regulations Pertaining to ELL and Second Languages:

The commitment to breaking down the barriers that hinder opportunities of children with limited English proficiency (LEP) began with **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Equal Education Opportunity Act of 1974**. These acts clearly state that failure to provide LEP students with equal access to the teaching-learning process is a denial of their civil rights.

In 1974, in **Law v Nichols, the United States Supreme Court ruled**, based on the Civil Rights Act of 1964, that schools are required to give extra help to student who do not speak English. The decision stated that providing non-English speaking students with the same desks, books, teachers, and curriculum did not ensure that they received an equal educational opportunity.

Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL (English Language Learning) Programs

The new Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL (English Language Learning) Programs serve students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Limited English Proficient Students are identified through:

1. A home language survey sent to all students in the district. Whenever the survey comes back and mentions any language spoken at home other than English (or that the student has learned another language before learning English), the student is referred to the ESL program, tested and his/her needs for services determined.
2. Classroom teachers' evaluation of students' grade level skills. When teachers believe that students are not performing at grade level and that the reason might be language-based, students are referred to the ESL program for testing.
3. Interview information. When the ESL teacher interviews and tests a Limited English Proficient student, information regarding native language skills (speaking, reading, writing) are gathered. During the interview, the ESL teacher inquires about relatives to make sure no student who might qualify for services has been left out.
4. Based on the language survey results, students' academic files will be reviewed to determine each student's academic performance and curriculum-based needs.

Oral Language Proficiency Tests are used to assess the language and some content background of ELL students once they are identified by the Home Language Survey or by their classroom teacher(s). Students are tested in early September (or as soon as they enroll) and re-tested in May (redesignation) to assess progress (AYP). The ESL program keeps a copy of students' grades to make sure progress is made in content area.

The tests used by the Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL Programs included the IPT-Test-Oral, Grades K-6 English, Form E and the IPT-Test II-Oral, Grades 7-12 English, Form E in 2002-03. We are now using the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey.

The DK-12 programs can be divided into four levels: lower elementary (DK-2), upper elementary (3-5), middle school (6-8) and high school (9-12).

At the lower and upper elementary levels, support for ELL students depends on their oral fluency level and literacy skills. Students are pulled out for sheltered English and receive support in the classroom based on their needs. At the DK-K level, the support focuses on listening and speaking skills with the emergence of reading and writing. Literacy skills become the main focus at the Pre-1st-1st grade levels with emerging content support. At the 2nd-grade level, content-based ESL becomes the norm up to grade 5.

At the secondary level, content-based ESL and content support are the models for intervention. Again, the strategies and the activities used depend on the proficiency level of each student (listening, speaking, reading, writing and content background).

Language, content and cultural support for some secondary ELL students also takes place in the evening on Wednesdays and Thursdays during Homework Center. Volunteers and teachers work on language and content either one-on-one or in small groups.

The ESL strategies the Allendale Public Schools DK-12 programs use are varied and research-based.

What research tells us about how long it takes to become fluent in English (language and content):

Leading Second Language Acquisition experts such as Steven Krashen and Jim Cummins and experience in the field have shown us that the rate of language and content acquisition (becoming fluent and able to function at grade level) depends on several factors, including:

- Age when the student starts learning the second language (the earlier the better). The challenges students face are exacerbated when they start learning a language after puberty.
- Fluency and literacy level (speaking, reading, writing) in the native language. The more literate the students are, the easier it will be to transfer the skills from their native language to the target language.
- Content background. This represents how much formal education the students have received and how prepared they are to handle academic content.
- Level of motivation, personality and immigration status (personal, educational and professional goals). Stability is an important factor.
- Quality of the support programs both during the school day, after school and at home (language proficiency and literacy skills).

It takes an average of **two to three years** to develop Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (**BICS**). This is the daily language type of conversation. An example of a BICS conversation would be: "Hi, how are you? I like your new hair. Where did you go?"

It takes between **five to seven years** in order to develop Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (**CALP**) -- the language needed to read, really comprehend an assignment and produce quality, grade-level work.

Four Stages of Language Acquisition (BICS and limited CALP):

Stage 1: Pre-Production Stage

ESL learners at this stage of language acquisition have an extremely limited command of English, although they understand more English than they can produce. Students at this stage often use gestures, yes or no answers, nod or shake their heads to communicate.

Instruction at this level provides abundant opportunities for active listening, using props, visuals, and real objects to surround children with language.

Stage 2: Early Production Stage

Students at this stage comprehend more spoken English, but they still are unable to respond fluently. Communication is beginning, but responses are likely to be of the short-answer variety and may be awkward in grammar and structure.

Instruction should target getting students to understand rather than actively produce language by speaking or writing

Stage 3: Speech Emergence Stage

Learners at this stage can follow along for most of the classroom and daily routines, but they are limited by vocabulary and inconsistent grammatical structures.

Instruction targets exposing children to more complex vocabulary in the content areas and extending students' repertoire of spoken language.

Stage 4: Intermediate Fluency Stage

At this stage, students are well on their way to achieving dual-language fluency. They comprehend more, can respond more fluently using the conventions of English, and can make themselves understood in a variety of settings, social and academic.

Instruction should focus on acquiring content-area or specialized vocabulary and mastering more complex English grammar structures.

Stage 4 somewhat represents the transition from BICS to CALP. Students are more independent in terms of everyday classroom communication and interaction. This does not mean that they can yet perform at grade level.

**REMEMBER: MIND YOUR BICS
AND CALPS**

BICS



CALPS



Linguistic Differences of Home Languages

Native Speakers of Spanish

Written language ESL learners who are proficient in writing Spanish as their native language may transfer the use of diacritical marks such as accents and tildes to written English to indicate syllabic stress or altered pronunciation. Give gentle reminders that English words do not use such written marks.

Spelling final consonants The Spanish languages lack many final consonant sounds found in English (except final n, s, and l, which are present in many Spanish words). ESL learners might not pronounce them and may omit them in written language. Reinforce the sounds of final consonants, blends, and digraphs throughout lessons.

Sound to letter Because Spanish and English use the same alphabet, some Spanish-speaking students will need additional practice associating a “new sound” to letters they already know. Areas of difficulty include distinguishing short from long vowel sounds in English (Spanish has one sound for each); pronouncing h, which is silent in Spanish and pronunciation of v, which is pronounced like b in Spanish.

Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL Programs Progress Assessment:

Assessing progress on a yearly basis is crucial to evaluate our programs. Once Allendale Public Schools (APS) ELL students have been tested using the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey, short and long term language and content goals are developed for each student. The individual goals are based on:

1. What the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey has diagnosed, and
2. An informal evaluation of ELL students' content background by their teacher(s). The informal content evaluation (what content area the ELL students need to improve) is reported on a form provided by the ESL teacher. Test redesignation goals (May retest) are also developed for each student. **A one-level increase in oral English proficiency is the most realistic yearly minimum for beginner and intermediate students. Other annual yearly goals are set based on each student's circumstances.**

The ESL programs maintain a database of test diagnosis and redesignation goals. This database provides clear information regarding:

1. How many ELL students were tested at each grade level,
2. How many students demonstrated oral fluency (Oral fluency does not mean literacy and content proficiency. A student can show oral fluency on the IPT test while not able to perform at grade level). **These results make our baseline data,**
3. How many students showed improvement on the Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey (determined by May retest),
4. How many students increased by one level
5. How many students increased by two levels
6. How many students increased by more than two levels

A student is exited from the ESL program when **ALL** the following criteria are met:

DK-12

1. Student test scores (Woodcock-Muñoz Language Survey) show that the student is speaking, reading and writing at grade level.
2. Classroom teachers attest that the student is doing grade-level work in all content.
3. The student is receiving a passing grade in each subject area.

Based on research, students are expected to learn to speak English in about three (3) years and perform at grade level (literacy and content) in five (5) to seven (7) years.

A team consisting of the content teacher(s), ESL teacher, administrators and any other teacher who works with the student (i.e. special education teacher) makes the decision whether the student is ready for exit from the program. When the student has met all the criteria, and an exit form is completed, copies of the form are placed in the student's ESL file and sent to the parents/guardians in their first language (if possible). When written notification is not available, the parents/guardians will be notified of exit from the program through oral communication.

The ESL program staff monitors the student for two years following exit. The student may re-enter the program if needed.

Testing Accommodations and Limited English Proficient Students:

Purpose and philosophy of testing modifications (accommodations):

The purpose of testing modifications is to provide for equalization, not performance enhancement. Modifications should be consistent with instructional practice. Students who do not receive ESL Services are still eligible for instructional and testing modifications.

Standard administration is essential. The need for modifications must be documented. A proctor must be present during test administration.

An LEP student (as identified by the state) is an individual who:

- was not born in the United States or whose native language is a language other than English.
- who comes from an environment where a language other than English has had a significant impact on the individual's level of English.
- whose difficulties in speaking, reading, writing may be sufficient to deny the individual the ability to meet the State's proficient level of achievement on State assessments.

The accommodations we can provide are:

- Additional testing time.
- Frequent or extended supervised breaks.
- Administration of the test at a time most beneficial to the student.
- Administration of the test in an ESL classroom.
- Test administration in a small group setting.
- Reading all directions to the student in English and in the student's native language.
- Provision for student restatement of directions in his or her own words.
- Clarification of directions by asking students to restate them.
- Reading of mathematics, social studies, science and writing assessment content and questions to the student in English or native language (Reading Parts 2A, 2B or 3 or the ELA test to the student should not be done).
- Use of bilingual word-for-word translations dictionary.

Caution: any activity that undermines the reliability and/or the validity of inferences drawn from the test results is inappropriate.

Activities/Outreach for parental and community involvement:

Our newly created DK-12 ESL programs have regular contacts with families via a Web Site in English and Spanish and written communication delivered by the students in English and Spanish (Spanish being the language of more than 90% of our parents/guardians). We keep families informed of what we are doing in the ESL classrooms and also ask for their input when working on specific projects. For example, we are

currently developing a video of personal experiences (our ELL students) in regards to acquiring the English language and adapting to a new culture. To help their students brainstorm, families are encouraged to discuss at home what strategies worked as students found themselves in a new environment. We will make this video available to the teachers in the district next year if everything goes according to plans.

We will also produce “Welcome to Our Schools Videos” next year in Spanish and English (Elementary, MS and HS). These videos will be scripted, filmed and edited by our ESL students at the MS/HS.

Communication with parents also takes place by phone in English and Spanish when necessary and during Parent/Teacher conferences (with translator if necessary). Conferences are held during the day and the evening to accommodate for different schedules.

Activities and outreach for families take place as we develop a 6-12, after-school, linguistic, content and cultural program staffed by tutors working with ELL students one-on-one or in small groups on Wednesdays and Thursdays. Tutors are either pre-service teachers from the local School of Education (Grand Valley State University) or some of our high school students who learned English as a second language and have excelled.

The next step will be to combine this extracurricular, linguistic, content and social program with the existing ESL Adult Program (Community Education) depending on what the future of this program is. The goals are to advertise and recruit family members to socialize in English (culture, entertainment) and develop common assignments for families (parents/guardians) and students in our ESL programs. When families participate in their students’ acquisition of the language, it creates bonds and a greater ability to serve as role model. It demonstrates that language acquisition is a priority in a competitive society.

Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL Programs are based on the best language acquisition theories:

The Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL Programs use research-based methods (Brain research, learning styles and Second Language Acquisition Theories) and best practices to provide meaningful instruction. The key factors that play a critical role in the development of language acquisition for school are:

1. First and second language development,
2. Academic development (content background),
3. Cognitive development, and
4. Social and cultural processes.

The Allendale Public Schools DK-12 ELL Programs use the following methods and best practices (keeping in mind that language and content development are age-based):

- Emphasis on Steven Krashen’s Second Language Acquisition Theories, including Natural Approach, affective filter, comprehensible input, I+1 progression and silent reading (See appendix for details).
- Emphasis on using student-produced language to develop literacy skills.
- Addressing a range of students’ learning styles, multiple intelligences, interests and cultural backgrounds.
- Integrated learning of oral language, reading, and writing.

- Integrated learning and content instruction with a thematic approach.
- Meaningful lessons and units that promote concepts development.
- Emphasis on inquiry, discovery and problem-solving.
- Emphasis on developing metacognitive skills (Metacognition refers to learners' automatic awareness of their own knowledge and their ability to understand, control, and manipulate their own cognitive processes).
- Relevant, engaging and challenging instruction in a safe environment where students respect others and take risks.
- Drawing on students' background experiences, cultures and languages.
- Building background knowledge by providing concrete experience (creating schema).
- Cooperative learning in an interactive environment.
- Use of native language when necessary to foster understanding and show the importance of first language.
- Scaffolding of instruction to promote a higher level of learning.
- Modeling expected behaviors and information processing.
- Use of text and multimedia in native language (when literacy level is appropriate) to foster content acquisition while developing language skills.
- Use of Realia, manipulatives, visuals, and multicultural materials.
- Developing an after-school program to provide additional opportunity for language interaction and content acquisition.
- Promoting family-school partnerships.
- Coordinating effort with Allendale Public Schools Community Education to recruit families for the adult evening program.
- Developing common projects with the evening program to foster language and literacy acquisition at home in a partnership between students and their families.

Instructional/Classroom Strategies for ELL (English Language Learning) Students:

The most important piece of advice is to remember how it was for you when you had to learn another language. Put yourself in their shoes and your immense talent will do the rest. Most of all, embrace their cultures and their individuality. These children have so much to offer all of us.

Some suggestions/strategies for working with ELL students:

- Classroom climate. Creating a warm, accepting environment (respect all cultures, individuals and languages). Importance of names and how to pronounce them.
- Buddy system (making new friends). Best to pair up with one student (two students would be best if one is a no show) who has excellent language skills and maybe speaks the native language. If not possible, same-gender partners are preferable (mature students).
- Develop survival skills (rehearse with gestures, have PAL escort to bathroom, cafeteria, etc...).

- Find everything you can about specific culture, how families are involved, what family dynamics are, etc...
- Know family and immigration status.
- Have proper expectations (**Remember BICS and CALPS**).
- Remember that it is physically draining to learn a new language because it requires a high level of concentration. Not an easy task at any age.
- Remember that language acquisition starts with listening. Some students may need 6 months before they produce any language. **This is called the Silent Period.**
- Decrease rate of speech and use clear language. Try to eliminate contractions as much as possible (is not, are not instead of isn't and aren't).
- Reformulate statements as often as possible. Use synonyms when you can tell that you are not being understood.
- Make eye contact with the student when you are speaking to him/her.
- Correct language by modeling.
- Depending on literacy level, have bilingual dictionaries available.
- Use **Realia** (real objects), body language and visuals, etc.).
- Use pictures and word associations to reinforce meaning.
- Create a print-rich environment.
- If students are literate in their native language, encourage them to read for pleasure in their native language. Literacy skills transfer to English.
- Allow student to go out for recess if work is incomplete due to the language barrier; do not punish him/her for circumstances beyond his/her control.
- Remember that although your task may be taxing and frustrating, you are employing one of the best methods of language acquisition: **IMMERSION**.

Additional information and tips for the secondary level

One important aspect of language acquisition at the secondary level is “**transfer**.” Research has shown that literacy skills transfer from one language to another no matter what the first language is. This is why ELL students who are not literate in their native language should take a world language class if their native language is offered. Since the majority of our ELL students are Spanish speakers, we are at an advantage with the Spanish classes that are offered by our district.

Another important aspect of language acquisition at the secondary level is time. The clock is ticking for most of these students (remember that it takes on average 5-7 years to function at grade level). Every single day counts. In order for our ELL students to be successful, everybody should get involved. This involvement can be as simple as reaching out to make them feel welcome. Often, they feel isolated because of the language barrier and even when they are sufficiently proficient to engage in a simple conversation, they might remain silent and miss the opportunity.

Middle School

At the middle school level, the importance of individuality is even stronger for ELL students. They are searching for their own self and comparing their own development to their peers. These are tumultuous times during which MS students are not always as stable and focused as we wished they were. If you add another language into the equation, you can easily imagine how unsettling it is for our ELL students. They not only need to acquire a language and the grade-level content, but they also must adapt to a new environment and cultures while they are experiencing the same hormonal changes their peers are experiencing. If you add an unstable home environment and uncertain immigration status, we have real challenges in our hands.

As educators, we are at the forefront of this balancing act and must do everything we can to help all students reach their highest potential. Remember, we are working with talented young adolescents who have much to offer our learning community.

High School

The cognitive demands are overwhelming for HS students whose first language is not English. HS ELL students need to not only acquire a new language but also content while adjusting to new cultures. Remember that it takes on average 5-7 years for a non-native speaker to perform at grade level (CALP skills). As a rule of thumb, HS ELL students function more rapidly at grade level in disciplines that are not as language-based. These include Math (this seems to be changing with the MEAP demands), Technology and PE. The more cognitively demanding subjects are Science, English and Social Studies.

The crucial concept at this level is that content at first must be reduced and adapted (accommodations) to allow the ELL student to complete assignments. Having an ELL student fail because of proficiency is counterproductive.

Here are a few points to keep in mind:

- Do not assume ELL students have the background before moving on. This can be as simple as not knowing how a computer works.

- Isolation (one non-native speaker) in the classroom hinders language acquisition.
- Again, all students learning a second language go through A Natural Silent Period that can last for a long time depending on a student's personality. We must devise other ways to assess their progress.
- Be aware of ELL students' physical, emotional, social and cognitive development and needs.
- Task-based, interactive activities are preferable in a student-centered environment.
- Cooperative learning and interactive activities work well with ELL students when they are assigned a partner to assist them.
- Activities must be meaningful and relevant.
- Learning a language can drain your energy. Activities that are short in duration are preferable.
- In terms of cognitive ability, going from concrete to abstract activities works best.
- ELL students need extra help discovering and shaping their identity because of multicultural issues.
- Create a supportive acquisition-rich class by labeling things around the classroom.
- The more senses the ELL students use, the more acquisition and retention.
- Remember the Affective Filter (see terminology at end of packet): Making our ELL students feel comfortable by integrating them and not putting them on the spot can really help.

Guidelines to adapting content material

Adapting material is largely a matter of simplifying the language of a text without distorting or diluting its meaning (content). The aim is to make the material more accessible by eliminating a few linguistic features that impede comprehension. In some cases, you will also want to add language that clarifies the passage, and in some you will have to reformulate the sentences to make them clearer. The material that results has two purposes:

- it reinforces what the students have already encountered in an oral presentation
- it provides a bridge for their reading of linguistically more complex material in the area.

While few teachers have enough time to adapt a lot of material for their students, most can spare the time needed to adapt short passages that encapsulate a lesson's main ideas or some aspect of those ideas that requires careful understanding. These guidelines are intended for those teachers who want to create a file of such passages over the course of a year--in other words, to adapt and recycle passages from time to time to strengthen their students' grasp of the course's content. Though the process of material adaptation may seem complicated at first, it is relatively easy once you become fluent in following the strategy outlined below.

SELECTING THE PASSAGE

1. **Make it relevant.** Be sure to select a passage that bears some relevance to material you have already covered in class. Material that is only tangentially related may confuse and turn off students.
2. **Keep it short.** Don't try to take on a whole chapter or even necessarily a large chunk of a single chapter. Usually 1-3 paragraphs are enough to give students the help they need.
3. **Locate visual support.** In many cases, there are illustrations, graphs, or graphic organizers in the source text that can be copied and incorporated in the adapted version. In some cases, you will have to find visual support in other sources. They will aid general comprehension by giving the

passage a context and reminding readers of the content they have already encountered. In many cases, the whole adaptation can be organized around graphic organizers like semantic webs or flow charts.

ANALYZING THE PASSAGE

1. **Analyze the content.** Quickly jot down the main ideas in the passage. In some cases, it is helpful to outline or summarize the text before you adapt it. In any case, you need to extract its essence so that the overall shape of what you will produce is clear. You also need to be clear about its logical structure and the cohesive devices used to hold the passage together.
 2. **Underline difficult words.** Quickly identify those words that your students will find difficult. Bear in mind that some technical words are cognate with words in the students' native languages--that is, they will have the same origin, appear similar, and overlap in meaning. Therefore, you don't need to find substitutes for such words because the students will quickly grasp their meanings. Since, however, not all languages are cognate with English, many such words will still have to be adapted.
-

ADAPTING THE PASSAGE

1. **Write shorter sentences.** Make the sentences shorter. Once you are satisfied that they are as short as you can possibly get them, try to make them a little shorter.
For example:
It is commonly assumed that stars result from the astronomical condensation of massive clouds of cosmic dust and hydrogen gas, which is the lightest and most abundant element in the universe.
This can be broken down into two shorter sentences:
It is commonly assumed that stars result from the astronomical condensation of massive clouds of cosmic dust and hydrogen gas. Hydrogen is the lightest and most abundant element in the universe.
How can you break these sentences down further?
2. **Simplify the vocabulary.** Whenever possible, incorporate words that the students have already used in their classes. New technical words are especially important.
3. **Simplify the grammar.** For example, use the active voice (The doctor set the patient's leg) instead of the passive voice (The patient's leg was set by the doctor). Also, use simple tenses whenever possible and avoid adverbs like *hardly* and phrases like *whenever possible* or *regardless of the answer*.
4. **Rework the sentence entirely, if necessary.** In many cases, changing the source sentence in a superficial way is not enough. In that case, write a new sentence, but be sure to preserve the meaning of the original version. In some cases, extraneous material can be eliminated. The passage can also be broken down into more paragraphs.
5. **Add additional language for clarification.** For example, a simple example or a rephrasing makes the meaning clearer than it would otherwise be. You may also want to incorporate background information that will help the students grasp the overall meaning.
6. **Don't be afraid to repeat words.** Though we tend to avoid repetitions in formal prose, students can often benefit more from repetition than from the introduction of new, unknown words.
7. **Use cohesive devices (e.g., then, such, first, however, it, also).** Words like these give the reader clues as to the structure of the text as a whole. They help students understand the logical relationships among elements. Therefore, they are critical to the students' general comprehension.

Some resources:

- Flashcards for anything you need right out of your printer <http://www.esl-images.com/subpage1.asp>
- Use magazines (cut-up pictures) to illustrate concepts (singular, plural, animals, food, environments, categories, quantities, etc...)
- Use Microsoft Design Gallery for clipart <http://dgl.microsoft.com/>
Color printing can get expensive
- Dave's ESL Café <http://www.eslcafe.com/>
- If you are looking for particular resources (language, literacy or content-based), email me and I will try to find what you are looking for.

Terminology

Affective Filter

Optimal input occurs when the "affective filter" is low (Krashen, 1982). The affective filter is a screen of emotion that can block language acquisition or learning if the student is too self-conscious or too embarrassed to take risks during communicative exchanges.

Comprehensible Input

The learner can only acquire/learn language he/she can understand by connecting it to prior knowledge and known concepts. Language that is not understood is just noise.

Input + 1/Zone of Proximal Development

Input/instruction that is just above the students abilities. Instruction that is embedded in a meaningful context, modified (paraphrasing, repetition), collaborative/ interactive and multimodal.

Culture Shock

Feelings of disorientation and confusion upon contact with other, previously unknown cultural values and behavior. When a person is introduced into a new culture or cultures, he/she usually goes through five stages:

1. Pre-departure anxiety
2. Arrival honeymoon (this is the Disneyland stage where everything is new and exciting)
3. Initial culture shock (this phase can be associated with NO language acquisition at all, fatigue, fear)
4. Surface adjustment (students is slowly adjusting to surface culture)
5. Deep adjustment (student has found a balance between his/her own culture and the new cultures)

Rate of adjustment depends on age, immigration status, personality, culture of origin. Some students never fully adjust.

Natural Approach

Language acquisition theory based on the idea that what happens when an individual acquires a second language is very much like what happens when they acquired their first language. In this approach there is a focus on content rather than a focus on form. Overt error correction is avoided and dialogues and pronunciation drills are equally avoided. Oral language development (speaking) comes before reading and writing. Also, even though the instruction is in the target language, the students' first language may be used in class. The goal of the Natural Approach is to develop basic communicative skills. (BICS)

In the Natural Approach, the Teacher corrects errors through modeling. The teacher also allows for a silent period and does not force speech from students. The teacher will modify instruction to meet the needs of the individual students. The student will progress naturally through the 4 stages of language acquisition: (Pre-Production, Early Production, Speech Emergency, and Intermediate Fluency)

A key point for the teacher to remember is that speech production comes slowly and should never be forced. (Remember how long it takes for a baby to begin to talk). Second language learners will gain language skills in a sequence of listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The teacher should make all of the input for the students comprehensible and interesting.