

Chapter 3

How to Be Interculturally Responsive to Your English Language Learners' Writing Needs

Kathryn Jones

Capella University, USA

Jason R. Mixon

San Augustine Independent School District, USA

ABSTRACT

The goal of this chapter is to provide an overview of intercultural responsiveness (IR) in conjunction with taking an extensive inquiry into the three IR components. The knowledge of and strategies for cultural awareness, intercultural sensitivity, and cultural responsiveness are presented to edify and cultivate teachers of English language learners. With the foundational background of IR, educators will then be able to support their ELLs while they learn the writing process. It is understood from seminal research that all students that are learning to write will proceed within a prescribed sequence; additionally, the language learners will follow phases of second language acquisition (SLA) in their own progression. This chapter will review the phases of SLA, the five-step writing process resulting in recommendations that will benefit ELLs, and enhancements in pedagogy for teachers to subsist their instructional practices.

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INTRODUCTION

As educators look out into the classroom, they see an abundance of facial expressions, they hear conversations of lifelong friendships being built, and the educators' ambition of the classroom expectations being met. But does the educator see everything? Does he/she hear everything? There is great intention but how can educators meet all student needs in the classroom? We can meet those needs when we are aware of the cultural backgrounds, sensitive to the students' needs, and responsive to our students (Jones, 2013). The objectives of this chapter are to augment the intercultural acumen of educators through identified research-based strategies, theories, critical attributes, and best practices in the domains of awareness, sensitivity, and responsiveness. Intercultural responsiveness intensifies the achievement of English Language Learners (ELLs) in all content areas with copious improvements in writing, thus interlocking and galvanizing second language acquisition.

BACKGROUND

Language learners are attending U.S. public schools nationwide (Cohen, 2010; Ruiz, Soto, Hooker & Batalova, 2015) at a rapidly increasing rate. Across the nation, there has been overwhelming continuous growth of the ELL student population (Murphey, 2014; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019; Samson & Collins, 2012; Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016). Ruiz, Soto, Hooker, and Batalova (2015) reported 4.85 million English Language Learners (ELLs) in U.S. schools, which accounts for almost 10% of the students in U.S. public schools. There has been a steady population increase in ELLs for the past decade (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2014; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2019; National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2011; Pandya, Batalova, & McHugh, 2011; Samson & Collins, 2012). Throughout history, ELLs were typically immigrants to the U.S.; however, currently the majority of public-school enrolled ELLs are native born Americans. "The majority of LEP children enrolled in school, also known as English Language Learners (ELLs), were U.S. born: 85% of pre-kindergarten to 5th grade ELL students and 62% of 6th to 12th grade ELL students" (Zong & Batalova, 2015, p. 1). These students have been born in the U.S., however their diversity and their cultures are individually unique.

Diversity refers to the variety and differences that compose a group (Banks, 2016; Rosado, 2008). For the last two decades, diversity of students in the classroom has been continuing to be on the rise in comparison to the diversity of the teacher workforce causing a cultural mismatch (Barnes, 2006; Colombo, 2005; Cooper,

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