

Planning and application using a language-based approach to content instruction (LACI) in multilingual classrooms

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A language-based approach to content instruction (LACI) provides a framework for addressing content and language needs of multilingual learners by focusing on six Cs of support for scaffolding.

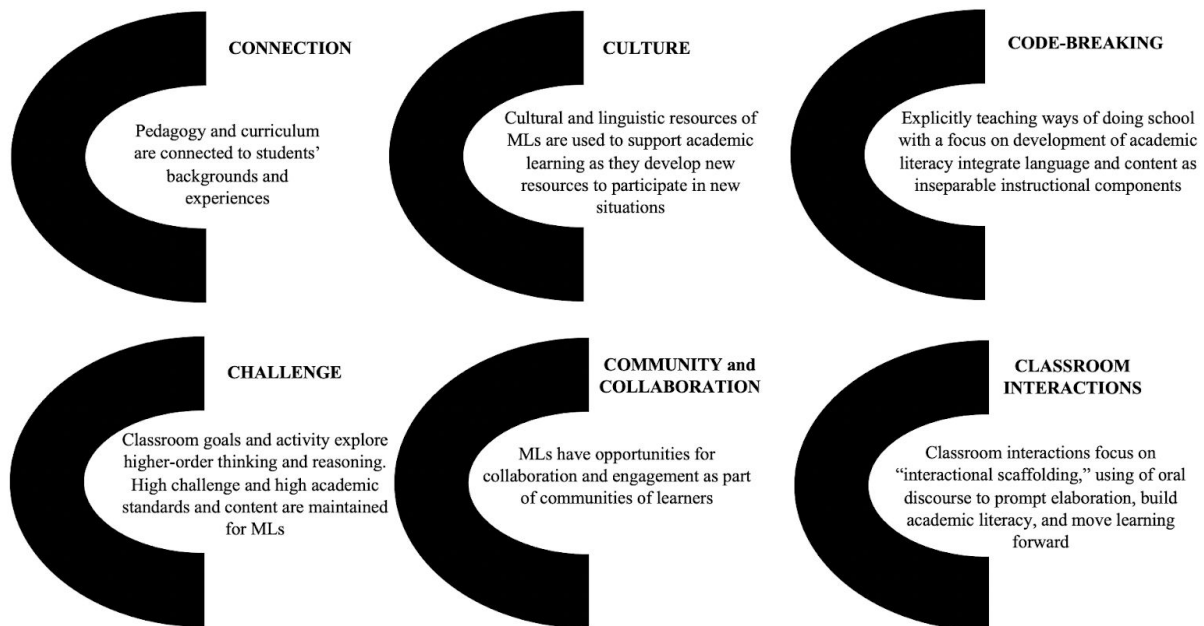
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Increasing numbers of multilingual learners (MLs) in schools have led teachers to search for approaches to help them reach this student population. One such approach is entitled a language-based approach to content instruction (LACI; de Oliveira, 2016, 2017). LACI places emphasis on language learning in the content area classroom, helping teachers foreground the language as a way into the content. Teachers, therefore, address both language and content simultaneously, as these are inseparable components. LACI, with a focus on content *through* language rather than on language through content, can be a means through which instruction for multilingual learners (MLs) can be accomplished in meaningful ways in a general education content area classroom.

LACI provides MLs with *access* to the language of the different content areas, not by simplifying content but by enabling MLs to manipulate language as it is written, without simplification. The notion of making content *accessible* is taken here to mean providing *access* to the academic language that constructs content knowledge. This approach is a powerful tool for raising teachers' awareness about the challenges of learning content, and enables them to more effectively contribute to the language development of MLs. The goal is to provide teachers with ways of talking about the language that enable them to focus on content and language.

This article describes LACI's six Cs of support for scaffolding content and language instruction for MLs (see Figure 1). It presents a lesson plan template for planning instruction for MLs and a guide for teachers to address the six Cs of support and structure content area instruction for MLs.

Figure 1. LACI's Six Cs of Support for Scaffolding Content Area Instruction for Multilingual Learners (based on de Oliveira, 2016)



LACI's six Cs of support

LACI builds on six Cs of support to provide scaffolding that have identified specific elements of instructional activities for MLs, as presented in Figure 1. The C of *connection* refers to the ways in which teachers can connect pedagogy and curriculum to students' backgrounds and experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lucas & Villegas, 2011; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2012). The C of *culture* as a principle enables students to build on prior knowledge by accessing cultural and linguistic resources (Moll et al., 1992; Valenzuela, 1999). Students' cultural and linguistic resources, or their "funds of knowledge" from home communities (Moll et al, 1992), are used to support academic learning as MLs develop new resources to be able to participate in new situations, bridging home and school and enhancing opportunities for students to learn (Valenzuela, 1999).

Code-breaking involves explicitly teaching ways of doing school, academic literacy, and disciplinary, linguistic, and cultural codes of content learning (Fang, 2006; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Schleppegrell, 2001, 2004). It is through this C of support that we see a clear integration of language and content as inseparable instructional components. The focus on academic literacy as a process of making academic dimensions of subject matter transparent for MLs includes bridging everyday and academic language as essential for understanding of content (Gibbons, 2006). Code-breaking uses principles of a meaning-based theory of language, systemic-functional linguistics (SFL) (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). This theory does not separately address language and content, but instead sees language as the realization of meaning in context. From this perspective, we place emphasis on content, helping teachers understand how the language works to construct knowledge in the discipline. LACI, and specifically code-breaking, enables a focus on language from each of these three angles: presenting ideas,

enacting a relationship with the reader or listener, and constructing a cohesive message (de Oliveira & Schleppegrell, 2015). In terms of presenting ideas, we focus on the content of the message, looking at verbal and visual resources that construct the content presented in the nouns, verbs, prepositional phrases, and adverbs. Enacting a relationship with the reader or listener enables us to identify language resources that indicate the kind of relationship we are enacting; whether it is formal or informal, close or distant, and whether it includes attitudes of various kinds. We can explore the verbal and visual resources that construct the nature of relationships among speakers/listeners, writers/readers, and viewers, and what is viewed. Constructing a cohesive message involves language choices that construct a message that holds together. We explore the verbal and visual resources that are concerned with the organization of the information and elements of texts and images used to present content in a cohesive way.

Challenge relates to classroom goals and activities that explore disciplinary literacy and higher-order thinking and reasoning. High challenge and high academic standards and content are maintained for MLs (Hammond, 2006). The C of *community and collaboration* refers to joint productive activity in which students co-construct knowledge (Brown & Campione, 1994; Lave & Wenger, 1991). Teachers create communities of learners where all students participate in activities to socially construct knowledge (Nieto, 2000).

Classroom interactions focus on “interactional scaffolding,” the use of oral discourse to prompt elaboration, build academic literacy, and move discourse and learning forward (de Oliveira & Smith, 2019; de Oliveira et al., 2020; Hammond & Gibbons, 2005). Interactional scaffolding includes three main processes:

1. Linking to prior experience, pointing to new experiences, and recapping refers to teachers’ ability to target a specific learning area to MLs’ current levels of knowledge and their English language abilities.
2. Appropriating and recasting students’ contributions, typically during discussions or elicitation, involves the teacher’s direction of students’ contributions by means of recasting their words into more content, language, context appropriate discourse.
3. Using the Initiation, Response, Feedback (IRF) sequence includes teachers offering strong verbal or gestural hints about expected responses, especially targeting specific students for specific purposes so students can say more and reflect on their understanding, that is, they ask for clarifications, probe a student’s response, or ask to explain a particular point in detail.

LACI application framework for content area teaching

LACI has been applied in pre-service and in-service teacher education to focus on the teaching of all content areas—English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. For this article, I show the lesson plan format used for LACI planning and a planning guide with LACI’s 6 Cs of support.

Lesson plan

[The lesson plan format](#) that evolved from the implementation of LACI over the years is presented next. This lesson plan format includes the principles of the six Cs of support along with the more “traditional” elements of a lesson plan, including:

- content and English language development standards
- content and language objectives
- instructional strategies and learning tasks through which teachers plan the delivery of the lesson and how they will differentiate for different groups of students

Planning guide utilizing the six Cs of support for content instruction of multilingual learners

The planning guide shown after the lesson plan (Table 1) presents questions, examples, and a column for teachers to plan how they would address the six Cs of support and structure content area instruction for MLs. Teachers can use this guide as they are using the lesson plan template.

Table 1. *Planning Sheet Utilizing the Six Cs of Support for Content Instruction of Multilingual Learners*

C OF SUPPORT	GUIDING QUESTION	EXAMPLES	CONTENT AREA APPLICATION
Connection	<i>What will you do to connect the lesson to students' prior academic learning, backgrounds, and experiences?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connect to previous discussion • Connect to previous lesson • Encourage recall of prior learning • Question to connect experiences to lesson 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use connection in your lesson:
Culture	<i>How will you link the new content skills and concepts to students' cultural and linguistic resources to support academic learning?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use home language support • Draw on students' cultural and linguistic resources • Connect to students' life experiences 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use culture in your lesson:
Code-breaking	<p><i>What will you do to explicitly teach ways of doing school, academic literacy, and disciplinary, linguistic, and cultural codes of content learning?</i></p> <p><i>How will you model the language forms/ vocabulary/function/ skills?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore verbal resources, visual resources, other multimodal means of presenting content: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What is the text/image about? 2. What are the key concepts developed in the text/image? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the nature of interaction with the content (e.g., formal vs. informal; close vs. distant; attitude; judgment); focus on enacting a relationship with the reader: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. What is the author's perspective? 4. How does the author of this text/image interact with the reader/viewer? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the organization of information, including connections between sentences and paragraphs (e.g., reference devices; repetition of words and phrases); focus on constructing a cohesive message: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. How is the text/image organized? 6. How does the text/image construct a cohesive message? 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use code-breaking in your lesson:
Challenge	<p><i>What aspects of disciplinary literacy will you address?</i></p> <p><i>Which higher-order thinking and reasoning skills will you focus on?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain high academic standards for MLs (while simultaneously providing high levels of support) • Include activities that require students to analyze and evaluate events or practices and/or create products 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use challenge in your lesson:
Community and Collaboration	<i>How will you engage students in collaboration and build a community of practice?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use activities where students can work together • Implement student-centered activities • Include varied participant structures 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use community and collaboration in your lesson:
Classroom Interactions	<i>How will you use "interactional scaffolding" in the classroom?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link to prior experiences • Recap students' contributions, rephrasing comments into language specific to the content area • Plan for use of oral discourse to prompt elaboration, build academic literacy, and move discourse and learning forward. 	Please explicitly list out specific ways that you plan to use classroom interactions in your lesson:

Conclusion

This article presented LACI's six Cs of support for scaffolding, a lesson plan template using these Cs, and a guide to help teachers plan instruction for MLs. Content area teachers need knowledge and practical ideas about addressing the academic language needs of MLs since they

have the dual responsibility of facilitating MLs' content learning while also supporting their ongoing English language development. LACI accomplishes this dual focus by helping teachers develop ways to talk about both language and content. The six Cs of support integrated in LACI provide the kind of access that is crucial for MLs who are learning content and language and simultaneously.

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