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Introduction

Coaching Teachers With Multilingual Learners in Their Classrooms

EXTRA, EXTRA, READ ALL ABOUT IT!

ExC-ELL DAILY NEWS

- Approximately 5.3 million English learners are in our schools.
- Schools may have between 25% and 75% long-term English learners.
- Nearly a million new migrants came to the United States in 2021–2022, many of whom are children.
- There is a critical English-as-a-second-language and bilingual teacher shortage.

Graphic created with Canva by Leticia M. Trower.

Sources: Batalova (2024), National Center for Education Statistics (2024), Regional Educational Laboratory West (2016), and Williams (2023).

These days, coaches must have the background knowledge and skills to address the diverse linguistic, cultural, academic, and social-emotional needs of multilingual learners who are now in practically every school in the United States. This book is written specifically for coaches who have the exciting opportunity of coaching teachers in schools that already are serving or will soon serve the needs of multilingual learners.

> The abbreviation *MLs* will be used to represent all the categories or terms applied across the country to English learners and/or multilingual learners. Chapter 2 presents the diversity in detail.

As MLs continue to arrive, all teachers in every school will need coaches who have second-language instructional strategies and philosophies among their extensive knowledge base. Coaches who have this base will be highly sought after. For instance, the newly arrived multilingual students in elementary schools must have support from a language specialist (English as a second language [ESL] or English language development [ELD] teacher) as required by state and federal legislature. The ESL/ELD teacher helps the general education teacher usually during language arts by working with the newcomer for a specified time. However, due to ESL and bilingual teacher shortages, the ESL/ELD specialist will most likely need to assist four or more teachers in the school and will not be able to stay long in one classroom. This means that the general education teachers will be left on their own for the rest of the day after the ESL/ELD teacher leaves. This is when the coach will be most welcome!

In secondary schools, core content teachers are too many and the subjects too diverse for there to be adequate language assistance from specialists in every classroom all day long as recommended by the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2015) and the U.S. Department of Education Office of English Language Acquisition (2023). Therefore, middle and high school teachers will benefit greatly from a coach who is learning or has learned about second-language acquisition for integrating principles and practices into all subjects.

> Core content teachers do not want to water down their expectations. They want to know how to reach MLs with the appropriate evidence-based scaffolds.

All teachers benefit from coaching that specializes in second-language acquisition, including knowing how to integrate academic language, reading comprehension, and writing skills into the content area being taught. Additionally, given the setback from the COVID-19 pandemic that stifled language development and affected national reading and social studies scores (mathematics could also stand improvement) for all students, every teacher wants to know what to do to help students.

When teachers and coaches receive quality preparation to enhance instructional practices that can integrate subject knowledge with academic language, reading, and writing skills, all students will benefit, not just MLs. In the following chapters, I will discuss how to better respond to the social-emotional needs of students, particularly new arrivals to the

country, and how culturally responsive knowledge by their teachers also plays a big role in coaching.

> The way we've done teaching and coaching since 2020 does not meet our current needs.

Coaches continue to ask us for new observational protocols and a better process of support. They feel that existing observation protocols and checklists for coaches of teachers with MLs need considerable adaptation. Coaches and teachers can systematically strengthen their knowledge of theories and evidence-based research that undergirds the development of MLs' language, literacy, and content areas with new research and practices. These new practices can also help develop cultural understanding and sensitivity to the assets students bring. This view of students will fortify a coach's feedback during student engagement, the detailed perceptions of teacher and student talk, and the use of social-emotional competencies by both teachers and students.

How We Can Adapt Coaching

In the past ten years, there have been many books and articles on coaching (Aguilar, 2013; Bright Morning, 2024; Costa & Garmston, 2015; Hattie, 2009, 2012; Knight, 2019, 2021) and randomized studies (Garet et al., 2001; Hill et al., 2018; Kelcey et al., 2019; Kraft & Hill, 2020) that affirm the value of coaching. We can all learn from the valuable ideas in these resources that apply to multilingual multiliteracy coaching.

> The term *multilingual/multiliteracy coaches* (*ML coaches*) is used to represent the coaches who support teachers teaching MLs.

For example, Edwards's (2024) synthesis of school-based studies on Cognitive Coaching (Costa & Garmston, 2015) lists studies that describe teacher satisfaction and benefits to teachers, how Cognitive Coaching built strength and ability in teachers and principals, and how teachers changed their views and practices about teaching students. Some studies mention multilingual students, and a handful of studies mention evidence-based student growth (Edwards, 2024).

The value of Cognitive Coaching for multilingual coaches is the goal of producing self-directed persons to be self-managing, self-monitoring, and self-modifying (Edwards, 2024). This goal applies to the efforts

coaches will be making as they manage, monitor, and modify their current practices to fit the new student populations and new requests for help from a different type of teacher whom they are unaccustomed to supporting.

There is one issue to consider from all these studies: Empirical experimental and control studies on coaching that measure effects on MLs specifically are yet to emerge and be disseminated. Just as with the National Reading Panel (2000) report, the authors only mention that MLs were part of the studies, but the data were not desegregated.

We can assume that Cognitive Coaching and other coaching programs have been effective with MLs, but why are so many long-term MLs, those who have been in our schools for many years, still underachieving? Why does it take so long for newcomers to learn English? Why aren't more schools adopting the type of coaching that yields outstanding outcomes for MLs?

Fortunately, there are some studies and theories of practice that we can apply or adapt to prepare ML coaches—particularly those who focus squarely on instructional practice. Knight (2021) tells us how coaches can partner with teachers to (1) establish a clear picture of reality; (2) set emotionally compelling, student-focused goals; and (3) learn, adapt, and integrate teaching practices that help teachers and students hit goals (Knight, 2022, Preface). Knight's ideas relate to coaching teachers with MLs because educators need a clearer picture of (1) what quality instruction looks like in multilingual classrooms; (2) how to focus on MLs' strengths and assets instead of deficits, removing past biases and misconceptions as the first step to setting appropriate goals; and (3) how all core content teachers need to learn, adapt, and integrate into their core content lessons language, social-emotional competencies, and literacy practices.

Knight's (2022) seven success factors for instructional coaching (partnership, communication, leadership, coaching process, data, instructional playbook, and system support) that must be in place for coaches to flourish apply to ML coaches. Discussion on these factors will be woven into the instructional chapters and the final chapter.

The Prevalent Process of Coaching

Coaching in multilingual/multicultural classrooms can take the form of the *prevalent or familiar coaching* cycle, demonstrated in Figure I.1: planning the observation and data collection, conducting the observation, teacher and coach analyzing the data from the observation, teacher and coach reflecting on the results of the analysis, and planning the next steps. The communication techniques, the process, and the

responsibilities of the participant are basically the same in most coaching approaches used today. *It is the content or focus of the observation and feedback that changes.*

Figure I.1   The Familiar Coaching Process
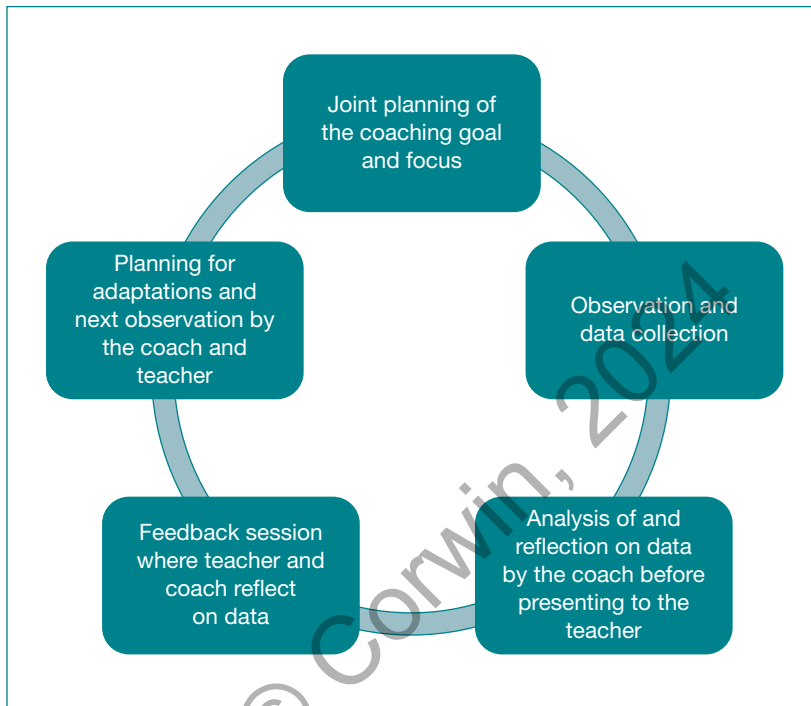
The Proposed Focus of Coaching in Multilingual Classrooms

Impact on learning and excelling in academic language and literacy is the content target for coaching in classrooms with MLs. As shown in Figure I.2, teachers of MLs simultaneously address language, literacy, and content development. Instruction stems from an assets-based mindset about MLs. Observations, data collection, and feedback are specific to improving language, as well as literacy integrated into content development and outcomes. This specificity is what has been missing from most existing types of coaching.

Figure I.2   Content for Coaching in Today's Schools

Source: Graphic by Leticia M. Trower

online resources   Available for download at http://resources.corwin.com/CMLExcellence

The Purpose of This Book

The purpose of this book is to provide a language, literacy, and content framework with the comprehensive instructional strategies that teachers of MLs can implement to help MLs succeed, and the strategies and coaching protocols that coaches can use to actuate teachers' quality implementation. This comprehensive example of a framework is not one-size-fits-all. For instruction to be effective for MLs, a whole-school framework must put these students at the center. Ways of ensuring a quality implementation supported by coaches are the focus.

We want to highlight the areas where coaches can adjust their preparation to effectively work with general education teachers. Due to the high demand to provide effective coaching for middle and high schools, many of the suggestions and examples here are dedicated to Grade 6–12 teachers of mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and all other subjects who have one, a handful, or a classroom full of MLs. Teachers will realize that the instructional strategies described here apply to every subject because students need to discuss, read, and write in every subject. Moreover, most state tests now require reading and written explanations that are dependent on a rich vocabulary repertoire.

Coaches who work with ESL/ELD teachers within self-contained classrooms or who team-teach with K–12 teachers will also find this extremely useful, including for coaching dual-language teachers or sheltered instruction teachers at K–12 schools.

Processes and strategies were tested in different coaching situations, conditions, and contexts: expert external ML coaches, site-based coaches, peer/collegial coaches, co-teachers as coaches, students as peer coaches, and administrators/supervisors as coaches. Administrators go through the same professional learning sessions to provide support for teachers.

In the upcoming chapters you will see all of the following:

◗ Instructional strategies focused on the language domains: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking

◗ Teacher and coach discourse woven into vignettes

◗ Social-emotional strategies that can be easily taught during each domain

◗ Ways to prepare students to work in pairs or teams to accelerate language interaction, increase depth of reading comprehension, and improve writing

◗ Contributions by nationally known coaches and experienced multilingual/multicultural coaches working in or with multilingual/multicultural schools that include their views, experiences, successes, challenges, and resiliency tips

◗ In-chapter instructional strategies followed by suggestions for "what coaches do"

◗ Reflection questions with space for notes, offered for collegial discussions, problem solutions, and contemplating next steps

◗ End-of-chapter graphic summaries highlighting the main points and/or practical checklists

◗ End-of-chapter comments from teachers, coaches, and principals for you and your colleagues to discuss and begin to build a road map toward student, teacher, coach, and whole-school success

Chapter 1: Coaching—What It Is and What It Is Yet to Be

Elaborating on "why" it is time to enhance coaching practices in all the schools, Chapter 1 describes and builds upon extensive prior and current research on the benefits of coaching as described in the Preface. It lays out the process for transfer from the workshop/learning event into a teacher's instructional repertoire, the administrator's implementation responsibility, and a student's learning accountability. Perhaps *the most important* why *of coaching is the transfer and impact on MLs' learning*. Connections to MLs' academic success in middle and high school are made.

> Transfer is typically overlooked in most professional development initiatives.

Chapter 2: What Do Instructional Coaches Need to Know to Coach Teachers With Multilingual Learners?

Chapter 2 describes the diversity of MLs and their needs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, there were approximately 5.3 million English learners (ELs) in American public schools in the fall of 2021 (National Center for Education Statistics, 2024). *English learner* is still the official term used by the Departments of Education and Justice, although the terms *multilingual learner* and *emergent bilingual* are now preferred by educators. Not surprisingly, there are other terms to consider as well. Some categories, moreover, are not included in the formal count.

The ever-growing number of MLs is compounded by students who have not yet been identified as MLs. Requirements from the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division and U.S. Department of Education Office for Civil Rights (2023) call for state education agencies to monitor local schools and districts to make sure the following occurs:

- ◗ MLs are promptly and properly identified.
- ◗ MLs have meaningful access to grade-level content.
- ◗ All ML teachers are well prepared.
- ◗ Programs include English proficiency benchmarks to ensure that MLs are making progress in learning English and that steps are taken if they are not.
- ◗ MLs who exit the EL category and no longer need ESL support must be monitored for two years after demonstrating the capacity to do ordinary work in English, and remedies must be provided when needed.

> In addition to the compliance requirements, there is a moral commitment to help all students excel in school.

Chapter 3: Coaching Reading Teaching and Learning

Reading is a student's most valuable tool. Students in middle and high school need good reading skills to succeed in mathematics, science, social studies, language arts, and other classes. Vocabulary/academic

language is a subcomponent of reading comprehension that undergirds information processing, critical thinking, and rich discussions about what students read. We know that MLs are not reading enough. They can accelerate their reading skills with specific strategies that were developed for and tested with MLs. In Chapter 3, we address these questions:

◗ What does the research say about reading for MLs?

◗ Why do these reading strategies work for all students?

◗ What reading strategies work in all subject areas?

◗ How do we coach teaching reading? Are there sentence stems or discussion starters for coaches to use?

◗ How do we observe MLs and collect what type of data to know if they are becoming proficient readers?

◗ How do we collect data for coaching on student interaction during reading activities?

◗ What social-emotional discourse can we look for during reading practice?

◗ What observation protocols, processes, and tools in English and other languages can teachers and coaches use?

Chapter 4: Coaching Vocabulary and Discourse

Vocabulary is a huge part of literacy. Because it is a subcomponent of reading, it behooves teachers and coaches to be well versed in the features of language and the most effective and efficient instructional strategies for teaching vocabulary. Teachers introduce key vocabulary from the text or projects that students are about to encounter in class to help them comprehend and master the content.

We have been hit hard by surprising results from the national mathematics, social studies, and reading outcomes. Yet, we are also dealing with years of injustice because the achievement gaps between whites, Latinos, and Blacks existed long before COVID-19. Changes that need to be made are difficult. Perhaps this is the time to coalesce changes that have evidence of being effective with MLs and other striving readers that can be implemented easily with the professional development process described in Chapters 1 and 6.

MLs have always been left behind due to not enough language instruction being connected to content texts or reading strategies for the diverse expository texts used in secondary schools. Sharing the research, premises, and tested strategies used with MLs in longitudinal studies, this chapter is organized around some questions we are typically asked:

◗ Why is preteaching vocabulary before every lesson critically important for MLs?

◗ How do we help teachers recognize the language demands of standards-based lessons and units?

◗ How can we be more deliberate, explicit, and methodical about teaching vocabulary, academic language, and academic discourse?

◗ Which words should we select to preteach?

◗ How do we teach a word/phrase?

◗ How do we coach vocabulary teaching strategies? Are there sentence stems or talking points for coaching this?

◗ How do we observe MLs and know if they are learning vocabulary?

◗ How do we coach student conversations?

◗ What is the role of native language instruction and translanguaging?

◗ What social-emotional discourse can we look for during vocabulary practice?

◗ What observation protocols, processes, and tools can be used by English and bilingual/dual-language teachers and coaches?

Chapter 5: Coaching Writing

Language is the basis of powerful writing. Once students have learned vocabulary from a mentor text and practiced using it before reading, during reading, and after reading, they can feel confident and properly tooled to do content-based writing. Chapter 5 addresses the following questions:

◗ What does the research tell us about writing for MLs?

◗ What writing strategies tap cultural appreciation as well as creativity, originality, and talents?

◗ How do we observe writing?

◗ How do we coach peer interactions during writing?

◗ What social-emotional discourse can we look for during vocabulary practice?

◗ How do we coach writing instruction and give feedback on assessing student writing? Are there sentence stems or discussion points for coaching?

◗ What observation protocols, processes, and tools can be used by English and bilingual/dual-language teachers and coaches?

Chapter 6: Creating a Whole-School Approach to Coaching

It takes a whole-school effort to plan and ensure the implementation of teachers' and coaches' new knowledge, skills, and dispositions. No school can afford to think that one ESL teacher and one coach will make a difference by themselves.

Topics in Chapter 6 concentrate on the transfer of learning into the classroom and the impact it can have on MLs and all other students:

◗ Professional development for teachers and coaches—together

◗ Types of teams for peer coaching

◗ Bracing for resistance and ways to deal with it

◗ In-person and virtual coaching options—and the benefits of each

◗ What works and what is doable

◗ Acknowledging precious time and ways of scheduling

◗ Assessing and addressing to what extent coaches and teachers are involved in this endeavor

◗ Data to gauge transfer from training and quality of implementation

◗ A summary of linguistically and culturally proficient coaching

Linguistically and culturally responsive coaching entails frequent analysis of implementation. To what extent are teachers implementing this model? How effective is the relationship between teacher and coach? Research shows that program implementation supported by comprehensive professional development is much more successful than buying a packaged program (Calderón, 2007; Short & Fitzsimmons, 2007). This book provides a content and process framework for coaches and teachers to learn in situ. It begins with a joint professional development program, followed by the application of their new knowledge in the classroom. Mistakes will be necessary to move forward together. Without taking risks and knowing mistakes are useful, we sustain the status quo.

More than ever, there's a great urgency to examine critically our attitudes, skills, and practices when working with MLs to improve teaching and learning. The goal of this book is to help coaches and teachers make that shift—perhaps you have been wanting to make these changes but need a little nudge and a couple of practical tools to help you and your colleagues look at diversity in new ways and enact what you already know can close those gaps. I celebrate the coaches who continue to make a powerful impact on multilingual students and classroom peers.