

Assignment and Assessment Makeovers
Nuts and Bolts 2021
BethSkelton.com

A. Ideas from Tan Huynh: EmpoweringELLs.com

1. Word Bank

The most important vocabulary words were identified and placed in a word bank. This supports spelling of words, but still requires students to know the meaning of the words. An example of the word bank is presented below the next strategy.

2. Synonyms

To prevent the test from becoming a reading assessment, provide synonyms to more challenging words when possible. For example, change the original statement: *“An organism that produces its own food by using light energy”* by keeping the original academic words (“organism” and “produces”) but provide a synonym in parentheses. The synonym is there only if they need it.

3. Simple Sentence Structure

Simple sentence structure usually consists of a sentence that follows this pattern: *noun + verb + detail*. There are no dependent clauses introducing the sentence, and there are no compound sentences that add another level of complexity. For example, the original question was written as: *In Hawaii, there’s a very diverse population of colorful birds. Though these birds have no natural predators, explain what would happen if domestic cats were introduced to the islands?* Notice how these sentences both have dependent clauses leading the independent clause. This grammatical complexity creates the potential for the question to become a reading assessment instead of a content-based assessment. Use the noun + verb + detail formula to create sentences with more simple sentence structures. Modified example: *Hawaii has a very diverse population of colorful birds. These birds do not have natural predators. Explain the potential impact of the introduction of domestic cats on these populations.*

4. Sentence Stems

Provide sentence stems to help ELs formulate their ideas more effectively. Sentence stems do not provide the answer; they simply support ELs in producing writing that follows an academic structure. Jane Echevarria, founder of the [Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol \(SIOP\)](#) model, recommends offering sentence stems that are increasingly more difficult so that ELs continue to grow after they have mastered the basics.

5. Images

Add relevant images to help ELs remember content vocabulary words. While the images contain the answer, ELs still need to write academic sentences to communicate their understanding.

B. Ideas from *Unlocking English Learners Potential*, Diane Staehr Fenner and Sydney C. Snyder

Level of Academic Language	Beginning ELP Scaffolds	Intermediate ELP Scaffolds	Advanced ELP Scaffolds	Scaffolds for All ELP Levels
Word Level of Academic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Word walls and word banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Word walls and word banks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Thesauri 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bilingual and/or English glossaries <input type="checkbox"/> Dictionaries <input type="checkbox"/> Direct vocabulary instruction <input type="checkbox"/> Pretaught vocabulary <input type="checkbox"/> Visuals
Sentence Level of Academic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quick minilesson to introduce new basic sentence structure <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence frames <input type="checkbox"/> Pretaught phrases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quick minilesson to introduce new compound or complex sentence structure <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence frames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Quick minilesson to introduce advanced grammar structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Sentence stems
Discourse Level of Academic Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph frames 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Paragraph frames <input type="checkbox"/> Paraphrasing activities (for fluency and register) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Paraphrasing activities (for fluency and register) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Graphic organizers <input type="checkbox"/> Shared writing
All Levels of Academic Language (Word, Sentence, Discourse)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Home language text and/or instructions <input type="checkbox"/> Reduced linguistic load for language of instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Home language text <input type="checkbox"/> Supplementary text or video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Supplementary text or video 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Access to text or video in home language, as well as in English, as appropriate <input type="checkbox"/> Cloze activities <input type="checkbox"/> Concise instruction of background knowledge <input type="checkbox"/> Repetition <input type="checkbox"/> Structured pair and small-group work <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher and/or peer modeling <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher-led small groups

C. Ideas from *Making Science Accessible to English Learners* by John Carr, Ursula Sexton, and Rachel Lagunoff

FIGURE 6.1. Test Accommodations for Use With English Learners

Test Accommodation	Purpose or Use
Extra Time	Provide extra time for English learners to read and understand test questions. They have extra thinking to do simply to understand and respond to a question in English.
Word Walls, Glossaries, Dictionaries	Provide word walls created during instruction for reference during assessment so English learners can more easily communicate conceptual thinking. Allow English learners at appropriate ELD levels to use glossaries and English and/or bilingual dictionaries (except when testing vocabulary, naturally).
Notes in Primary Language	When students are allowed to use notes during an assessment, allow English learners to refer to notes they made in their primary language. In this way the teacher makes it more likely that students can produce, in English, answers that they know in their primary language.
Models and Rubrics	Provide models of expected student work, particularly for students who have not previously produced this kind of product. Preview the scoring guide or rubric that will be used to judge the work. Previewing models and explaining rubrics before or during instruction helps students understand lesson and assessment objectives.
Enhanced Test Directions	Some test directions can be much more difficult to understand than the concepts measured. Read directions aloud and rephrase them as necessary to be sure English learners know what they are expected to do. Simplify test directions as much as possible. For example, segment multi-step directions if possible, stating one step at a time and allowing for student response between steps. When responses cannot be segmented, have students use the directions as a checklist for reviewing that they have completed all parts of the task.
Enhanced Test Items	Ensure that English learners encounter in a test the same key words and phrases that were used during instruction. Increase students' opportunity to understand the questions by providing synonyms or additional context for key ideas.
Oral Responses	Communicating through writing can be very challenging for English learners, especially when anxiety is high during an assessment. Allow novice English learners to give oral responses while the rest of the class completes a written test. (Out of range of the rest of the class, prompt students individually and scaffold the conversation as necessary to elicit meaningful responses.) Provide English learners who need support with sentence frames for open-ended questions and ask them to attempt written answers; then prompt students orally to give them an opportunity to clarify written answers that are ambiguous or confusing.
Illustrations, Graphic Organizers	Allow students to express ideas with labeled drawings, diagrams, or graphic organizers. Follow up by asking students to give oral explanations, written open-ended responses, or demonstrations.
Hands-on Activities	Have students perform a demonstration, activity, or experiment, and describe or explain their actions and thinking processes. For example, students might cycle through various assessment task stations in the lab, responding to the problem or question posed at each station. Have students who can write brief answers do so, and orally prompt English learners as needed.
Language Conventions	Ignore errors in language conventions in order to focus on students' understanding of science content. The time for corrective feedback of oral or written responses is during instruction. Expect beginning and early intermediate English learners to make many errors as they struggle to communicate meaning.
Small Groups	Administer a test separately to a small group of English learners if it helps to lower their anxiety (students still individually complete the test). Use prompts and scaffolds with individuals in the group and allow oral responses as appropriate to elicit students' best performance.