

Phonics and Fluency, Grades 2-3

English Learners

Sound/spelling correspondences

It is important to validate and reinforce English learners' existing knowledge of sounds and spellings. Encourage students to tell the class how they say the names of the alphabet letters in their primary languages. As they begin to deal with the sounds and spellings in English, allow the students to demonstrate the sounds of any letters their native language may have in common with English. Students who have learned a completely different alphabet should be encouraged to show the class what that alphabet looks like.

English learners will probably encounter some problems as the class begins to learn sound/spelling correspondences. This is not surprising; some sounds associated with English letters and spellings do not exist in other languages, and some sounds used in other languages do not exist in English. It will be reassuring to these students to learn that even English-speaking students have difficulty with some sound/spelling correspondences.

Phonetic problems linked to students' first language

The following table focuses on some of the main pronunciation problems English learners from eight language groups may encounter while learning English. The purpose of this table is to help teachers recognize why possible problems and confusions may occur. The table is by no means exhaustive and is meant to serve only as a guide. It shows pronunciation variances that students may make while learning English. For example, a student whose first language is Spanish may say something like *cot* when trying to pronounce the word *cat*. An empty cell indicates that the English sound listed poses no particular problem for students from the given language group.

[Click here to view the table.](#)

Sound/Spelling Cards

The routine for using the **Sound/Spelling Cards** can be beneficial to English learners, even with sounds that are not used in their primary languages. The "see/hear/say/write" sequence provides **ample reinforcement** of the sound/spelling correspondences by engaging students in recognizing and producing the sound and its spelling.

In addition, students do not have to know the English name of the picture on the card to be able to remember the action-sound association. They simply need to remember the action and the sound associated with the action. For example, in Mrs. Coronado's room, students learned that when the sausages sizzled, the sound they made was /s/ /s/ /s/. Students do not need to remember the name of the card or be able to segment the initial sound in the word *sausages*. This is a language-free cue.

In many languages, a single sound has only one spelling. During Workshop you might want to review the **Sound/Spelling Cards** with English learners until they are thoroughly familiar with English sound/spelling correspondences. Knowing the English sounds and spellings will give English learners the confidence they need to begin blending and to develop their reading skills. Remind English learners throughout the day to use the **Sound/Spelling Cards**. They don't have to worry about memorizing all the spellings. Knowing to check the **Sound/Spelling Cards** is the key!

Blending

Most English learners can understand more words than they can speak or read. Learning to blend, therefore, can provide these students with a valuable tool that will allow them to figure out on their own any words they know but do not recognize in print. As with all students, however, it is crucial that they understand the sounds and spellings that are introduced on the **Sound/Spelling Cards**.

In addition, English learners will learn about basic structural elements—inflectional endings and affixes—as part of blending. During Workshop, you may want to review the meaning of inflectional endings like *-ed*, *s*, or *'s*. Often second-language learners drop these elements or do not understand the meaning that they convey.

You may want to preteach the meaning of some of the words in the blending lines. By doing this, you will enable your students to recognize the word after they have blended it. Using blended words in sentences and extending sentences helps support vocabulary growth and language development.

Use Workshop time to encourage English learners to use the **Sound/Spelling Card Stories CD** or online. Encourage them to work alone or in small groups to listen to the **Sound/Spelling Card** stories for targeted sound/spelling correspondences. This familiarity will give them practice making the sounds and increase their confidence as they blend words and develop their reading skills.

Dictation

Dictation can be helpful to English learners by reinforcing the sound/spelling correspondences. For students who continue to have difficulty, you may want to conduct additional dictation sessions during Workshop, focusing on sounds-in-sequence dictation until the students begin to write more independently.

Proofreading is another important skill for English learner. It is crucial to point out what these students have done well and to let them know how important it is for them to find and correct their own mistakes.

Fluency

Like all students, English learners need a wealth of opportunities to become fluent readers. Workshop is ideal for working with students individually and in small groups, regardless of their reading ability, so students will not feel like they are being singled out any more than other students. Partner reading or small groups of readers provide a secure setting to get more practice reading. Here are some additional suggestions for meeting the special needs of students:

- Preread a selection from the Anthology and model the reading strategies as well as decoding. Encourage students to identify words and ideas they wish to talk about.
- Form cooperative/collaborative reading and work groups.
- Share your enthusiasm and excitement about reading with students. Foster a positive attitude toward reading by providing easy access to books and creating a non-threatening environment in which to read them.
- If possible, determine the reading level of the English learner in his or her primary language. Pair the student with a native English speaker at the same or slightly higher reading level in English. Help the pair use decoding strategies together as they partner-read selections by page or paragraph.
- Use audiotapes so that students can hear phrasing and English intonation.

Additional ELL Resources

Books:

August, D., & Hakuta, K. (Eds.). (1998). *Educating language-minority children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

Brown, H. D. (2000). *Teaching by principles: An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. New York: Longman.

Delpit, L. D. (1996). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. New York: New Press.

Websites:

Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL)
<http://www.tesol.edu>

National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS)
<http://www.nbpts.org>