

## Dictation and Spelling, Grade 1

### English Learners

English Learners benefit greatly from reviewing sounds and spellings, especially those sounds that are not used in their primary language. During Workshop you might want to review the *Sound/Spelling Cards* with English Learners until they are thoroughly familiar with English sound/spelling associations. Knowing the English sounds and spellings will give English Learners the confidence they need to begin blending and writing in English.

Phonological interference points between English and Spanish can make decoding and encoding difficult for some children. There is usually a regular pattern of phonological problems Spanish speakers have with acquiring English, including the following:

- Spanish has a phoneme like /v/ but does not have a distinction between /b/ and /v/—speakers may interchange /v/ and /b/.
- /ch/ occurs in Spanish, but /j/, /z/, and /sh/ do not—*sheep* may become *cheep*; *jump* may become *chump*.
- /h/ may be omitted, or a similar Spanish phoneme may be substituted for /h/.
- Spanish /r/ and /l/ are pronounced differently from English /r/ and /l/.
- In Spanish, the letter *i* is pronounced as a long e; there is no short *i* sound—*pig* may become *peeg*.
- The English short *a* vowel sound does not occur in Spanish; a Spanish phoneme similar to short e may be substituted—*fat* may become *fet*.
- The English vowel sounds *schwa* and short *u* do not occur in Spanish; a Spanish phoneme similar to short o may be substituted—*tuck* may become *tock*.
- Consonant clusters are rare in Spanish; extra vowels may be added to create syllables that make the cluster pronounceable—*stop* may become *eestop*.

### Phonetic problems linked to children's 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 decide which steps to take in order to address chronic pronunciation problems. The table is by no means exhaustive and is meant to serve only as a guide. It shows pronunciation variances that children may make while learning English. For example, a child 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 children from the given language group.

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

Dictation is helpful to English Learners because it reinforces the sound/spelling correspondences.

- Sounds-in-sequence dictation provides the support of the teacher, who helps the children to isolate each sound in a word. This support assures the English Learner success and also guarantees that he or she hears the sounds pronounced correctly and has the opportunity to pronounce the sounds.
- Dictation helps English Learners focus on the sounds in a word—including inflectional endings related to tense and number—that are often dropped in casual speech.
- Constant support and reinforcement help the English Learner attend to the individual sounds and learn the sounds that are not used in their native languages.
- Working with English-speaking peers helps English Learners understand that even those children born and raised with English can have trouble hearing all of the sounds in words. All children need help in this area—not just the English Learners. This understanding can help the English Learners respond right along with the others in the class.

Work with English-language learners during Workshop to reinforce the sound/spelling correspondences.

- Play the Word Building Game to help them start seeing the patterns of sound/spellings that are common in English.
- Provide extra dictation practice, especially with words containing sounds not present in their native languages.
- During dictation, pair English-speaking children with English Learners.
- Provide practice in the upcoming sound/spellings before the whole-class dictation activities. This helps reassure English Learners that they can hear the target sounds.
- Some children may need additional work in segmentation. Use some of the segmentation activities from the first and second units of the *Teacher's Editions* with these children.

### **Additional ELL Resources**

#### **Books**

August, D., and K. Hakuta, eds. *Educating Language-Minority Children*. Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1998.

Brown, H. D. *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. New York: Longman, 2000.

Delpit, L. D. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: New Press, 1996.

#### **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>