



Chapter 6

Building Background Knowledge

Key Points

- Effective biliteracy instruction begins with the establishment of a comprehensible context.
- Strategies that build on student language and experiences also develop background knowledge and academic oral language.
- While the development of background knowledge and academic oral language is the focus of the first part of literacy development in the biliteracy unit framework, academic oral language must be supported throughout the unit.

Book Study Activity Objectives:

Participants Will:

Collaboratively, through a Jigsaw reading activity, describe strategies that build on the background knowledge and experiences that students bring with them to the classroom.

Important Points for Discussion:

- The strategies presented in this chapter are good for ALL students and not just ELs.
- Since oral language is the first element in the biliteracy unit framework, it should not be abandoned after launching the unit but rather embedded throughout the unit to support the use of academic language throughout the unit.
- One important point is to highlight that many of these strategies may be used in conjunction with each other, for example you can utilize Sentence Prompts with Adapted Reader's Theater, TPR with Concept Attainment, Word Sorts in a Fishbowl, etc.
- Make sure participants elaborate on how they might use the strategies in the classroom.

Instructions for activities, and notes for the book study leader:

- Provide copies of the *Strategies that Support the Development of Background Knowledge and Formal Language Chart* (see below).
- Divide the participants into partnerships or small groups. Ideally the participants can form partnerships but depending on the size of the groups, you may need to form small groups. There should be no more than 4 people in each group.
- Assign each partnership or small group a strategy to read and then describe/explain to the group.
- After reading, each partnership or small group will explain the strategy they read to the larger group. The participants can take notes on the *Strategies that Support the Development of Background Knowledge and Formal Language Chart* page.
- After taking notes on the chart, allow participants to get into their grade level teams. In their teams, guide them to choose two or more strategies they can incorporate into a current or upcoming unit.

Strategies that Support the Development of Background Knowledge and Formal Language Chart

Name of Strategy	Description of Strategy	I can use this to teach
Total Physical Response (TPR)		
Adapted Reader's Theater (ART)		
Concept Attainment		

Fishbowl		
Field Trip, Experiment, and Movie		
Word Sort and Sentence Prompts		

Formal and Informal Language Anchor Charts		
Contrastive Analysis of Language		