

## Additional ELT Scaffolds

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### Using Dictionaries

Dictionaries can provide valuable support for students. Bilingual dictionaries can enable a language learner to quickly find the translation of a new word that they hear or read, as well as provide a needed word that they want to write or say in English. Learner dictionaries can enable the learner to remain in the target language of English, but read an easier definition than a mainstream dictionary provides, along with learner-friendly usage examples. Picture dictionaries are available either fully in English, or in bilingual formats. These provide the opportunity for a learner to see an item and know what it is called in English. Specialty versions for science, social studies, and other academic areas can help develop academic vocabulary.

#### *Example Scaffold: Using Dictionaries*

A teacher is working with an early intermediate proficiency learner, building background on geographical terms prior to the student entering a class experience where students will be reading about and discussing the geography of their own region. The teacher finds a bilingual picture dictionary that includes several pages on geography. There are photographs of land and water forms, such as mountains, hills, streams, and rivers. Because terms are provided in both English and the student's native language, the student can understand the difference between similar land forms, such as a stream and a river, which might not be well understood through the pictures alone. When the student finally enters the class experience, talking about local geography, they are able to take with them the bilingual picture dictionary to use for additional support and understanding.

Many types of dictionaries are available for language learners today. Bilingual, learner, and picture dictionaries can be very helpful in providing support as students seek to comprehend and produce a new language.

### Using Gestures

There are many expressions and gestures that communicate well across many different cultures. For example, smiling almost always conveys a positive response. The more recent use of "high five" communicates success and congratulations in many cultures. Gestures that a student might not initially understand might still be quickly learned and used for communication, lessening the amount of language the student must hear and understand. For example, a teacher might use a circular motion for "repeat," and might use the hands in a "pulling apart" motion to show that a student needs to make a longer sentence and produce more words.

#### *Example Scaffold: Using Gestures*

A student is practicing sentences using ordinal numbers, focusing on producing the /th/ sound. The teacher asks, "When is your birthday?" The student answers "November 4." The teacher makes a pulling apart motion with the hands, which the student has learned means they need to produce a complete sentence. The student says "My birthday is on November 4." The teacher then points to the tongue between the teeth, and then creates a

circular motion with their hand, which the student has learned means “try again.” The student then produces “My birthday is on November 4th.” The teacher gives a high five to show that accuracy has been achieved.

Teachers sometimes speak too much in English language classrooms. Using gestures can diminish teacher talk, allowing students to focus more on their own language production.

## **Using Translation**

Judicious use of translation can reduce wasted class time trying to help students understand something in English that is above their language level. For example, translation can be helpful if the instructions for a task are too complex for students to understand in English, if students need help understanding background information before completing a task, or if students need to be able to convey an idea to the teacher, who can then help them learn how to convey that idea in English.

### *Example Scaffolds: Using Translation*

Students will be listening to a video-recorded lecture. Prior to the listening task, the teacher provides some background through digital text and invites students to translate this text into their native language if they want. The students are able to more easily understand the lecture, having built background on the topic in their native language first.

Students are asked to create a journal entry about a significant event in their life. One student approaches the teacher, saying they want to talk about the difficulty of immigrating to a new country, but they don’t know how to write about it in English. The teacher has the student write the event in their native language, then use Google translate to create the text in English. The teacher looks over the text, correcting any errors, and possibly simplifying the text to mirror the student’s language level. The teacher then has the student read the text aloud. The teacher helps the student understand unfamiliar words or phrases. After reading the English text several times, aloud and silently, the teacher then asks the student to write the event in their journal, in their own words and without looking at the text.

Translation can enable students to quickly understand what they are supposed to do, and it can help them learn background information. It can also allow them to talk or write about a topic that requires more complex language than their current level allows.