



# English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking: Learning in the Challenge Zone

By Pauline Gibbons

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## English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking: Learning in the Challenge Zone By Pauline Gibbons

*For educators individually and collectively who aspire to implement a curriculum based on intellectual quality, and who recognize the importance of infusing the teaching of academic literacy across the curriculum, Pauline Gibbons' book provides inspiration and guidance. The wealth of classroom examples based on actual practice convincingly refutes the argument, reflected in much current practice, that EL and low-income students are incapable of benefiting from an intellectually challenging, inquiry-based curriculum.*

**-Jim Cummins**

University of Toronto

Deep understanding, critical thinking, subject knowledge, and control of academic literacy are goals we have for all our students. The challenge for teachers is to find a way of teaching that helps everyone, including English learners, to reach these high expectations. In *English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking*, Pauline Gibbons presents an action-oriented approach that gives English learners high-level support to match our high expectations. Focusing on the middle grades of school, she shows how to plan rigorous, literacy-oriented, content-based instruction and illustrates what a high-challenge, high-support curriculum looks like in practice.

Gibbons (author of *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning*) presents and discusses in detail five broad areas that enable English learners to participate in high-quality learning across the curriculum:

- engaging deeply with intellectual contexts
- developing academic literacy
- employing reading strategies and improving comprehension
- gaining writing independence and learning content-area genres
- using classroom talk to make sense of new concepts and as a bridge to writing.

Based on these areas she then presents guidelines on designing long-term, high-quality instruction that simultaneously provides explicit scaffolding for English learners. Gibbons makes these guidelines an instructional reality through dozens of examples of rich activities and tasks that can be used across the curriculum

and that support the learning of all students.

*English Learners, Academic Literacy, and Thinking* supports teachers with doable plans for instruction, reflection questions for individual or group study together, and suggestions for further reading. The book is a valuable resource for inservice training and college courses and provides an ideal basis for a schoolwide response to the growing challenges of raising the achievement of English language learners.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### **About the Author**

Pauline Gibbons taught postgraduate and undergraduate TESOL courses at the University of Technology, Sydney, for many years, and is now an Adjunct Professor at the University of New South Wales, Sydney. She is also an independent EL consultant and her work with teachers has taken her to Hong Kong, Sweden, Laos, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, China, South Africa, Marshall Islands, Iran, Germany, UK, and USA. She has published extensively in EL education, including *Bridging Discourses in the ESL Classroom: students, teachers and researchers* (Continuum, 2006), and two other Heinemann books: *Learning to Learn in a Second Language* (1993) and *English Learners, Academic Literacy and Thinking: Learning in the Challenge Zone* (2009).

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