TEACHER CERTIFICATION STUDY GUIDE

DOMAIN I ENGLISH LANGUAGE LISTENING PROFICIENCY

COMPETENCY 1.0 THE CANDIDATE WILL APPLY LITERAL LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN ENGLISH

Skill 1.1 Identifying stated main ideas, details, sequences, and cause-and effect relationships in a variety of listening situations

In current ESL practice, students are being asked to listen to materials and different speakers and to respond to what they hear. Methods today require an interaction on the part of the listener. This may be a simple nod of the head, answering workbook exercises or performing an action.

To promote autonomy in the learner, Leshinsky (1995) recommends using a listening journal. In this journal, the listener summarizes what he/she listened to three times a week. Each exercise should be 30 minutes long. Suggestions are a TV program, a video, a movie, or a lecture.

In the ESL classroom, English Language Learners (ELLs) usually encounter three types of listening sources (Díaz-Rico, 2008):

- prerecorded selections by various native speakers: simulations of actual conversations
- audiotaped selections from various sources: brief formal lecture, a more informal presentation of same/similar material, and a question and answer section with speakers “from the real world”
- listening to real world sources: university lectures, TV game shows and answering workbook exercises

In each case, the listener develops listening skills through listen practice exercises which gradually increase in difficulty. It is common to encounter non-native speakers in this type of exercise.

Skill 1.2 Identifying steps described in a set of oral directions

When teaching students how to understand efferent (Rosenblatt, 2005) listening (listening to understand messages and to carry away meaning), Tompkins (2009) recommends four strategies for maximum effectiveness.

- **Organization**
  Students need to learn the basic patterns of expository text structures used in informational presentations. These are the same ones found in reading texts: description, comparison, sequence, cause and effect, and problem and solution. In sequence texts, key words such as first, second, third, next, then, in addition, at last, and finally can be taught so that students recognize the pattern being used.
Teaching students how to identify steps in a set of oral directions is not easy. However, students can be guided through activities which emphasize listening for key points. By preparing advanced organizers, the ELL may concentrate on what is required to complete the activity. Organizers may be prepared in advance and should be closely related to the task to avoid confusion.

- **Summarizing**
  The instructor can ask students to listen for two or three main ideas. These may be written on the board and circled. Students are asked to raise their hands as they hear the main ideas mentioned. Other information can be chunked around the main ideas.

- **Getting clues from the speaker**
  Speakers use many visual and verbal clues to get their message across. Students need to learn to recognize them.
  - **Visual clues**
    - Gestures
    - Facial expressions
    - Writing on the whiteboard
    - Underlining information on the whiteboard
  - **Verbal clues**
    - Pausing
    - Slowing down speech to emphasize key points
    - Raising or lowering the voice

- **Monitoring**
  Teaching students to monitor their listening habits is an important strategy because they need to be aware of when they are actively listening or have “zoned out”. They can ask the following questions at the beginning of a listening activity:
  - Why am I listening to this message?
  - Will I need to take notes?
  - Does this information make sense to me?

  Later on, during the activity, they may ask the following questions:
  - Is my strategy still working?
  - Am I organizing the information effectively?
  - Is the speaker giving me clues about the organization of the message?
  - Is the speaker giving me nonverbal clues, such as gestures and facial expressions?

It may be necessary for the teacher to guide the students through the process by stopping and helping them with the questions. Monitoring is important in many language arts activities because they need to be aware of the effectiveness of their learning and if it meets their purposes.
Skill 1.3 Choosing an appropriate response to a question or comment based on explicitly stated information

Guiding ELLs through the process of responding to listening activities, both formal and informal, requires patience and creativity. Oftentimes, the lack of oral response in class may be from a cultural difference. Many foreign cultures find it difficult to spontaneously interact as do native speaking Americans. Other possibilities are that the students are embarrassed to admit they do not understand, or simply don’t know what to say (Kehe and Kehe 1998 in Díaz-Rico, 2004).

However, since language develops best when practiced, it is necessary to encourage ELLs to practice speaking in informal ways. Pappamihiel (2002 in Díaz-Rico, 2004) suggests that allowing both English and the native language may help reduce anxiety for ELLs as they are developing their language skills.

Helping ELLs develop their Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) students overcome the challenge knowing what to say and how to say it. Cummins (1984) says that BICS are context embedded as factors other than the linguistic code contribute to meaning. Factors such as voice and gestures can also contribute to meaning.

To teach ELLs how to respond appropriately then, involves giving adequate, guided practice. In addition, non-threatening encouragement is will lower the affective filter allowing the message to be received. When comprehensible input is received, appropriate responses can be obtained.

Skill 1.4 Selecting an accurate paraphrase of an oral message

The classroom atmosphere for ELLs must be a non-threatening, relaxed atmosphere where everyone is encouraged to speak and have their opinions valued. As speaking skills develop, ELLs will develop the ability to paraphrase the oral message.

ELLs need ample opportunities to develop their paraphrasing skills. Some of the activities that are appropriate for developing these skills are: problem solving in small groups, practicing persuasive or entertaining speeches, role plays, interviews, chain stories, talks, problems and discussions (Zelman, 1996 in Díaz-Rico, 2004). Another way would be to have ELLs retell stories they hear in class and change the ending.

Tompkins (2009) suggests that students can illustrate or paraphrase lines of poems to add to their pictures. This could also be done as an oral activity.
Zwiers (2007) uses paraphrasing as a condensing technique. First paragraphs are placed on the overhead projector and the instructor condenses them into one or two sentences. Then, he uses the following prompts to get students to paraphrase their own work:

- How might you say that with fewer sentences?
- How can we condense what you just said?
- How can we synthesize what you all said?
- Let’s try to get that into one sentence. It can have multiple clauses.
- Can you paraphrase that for us?
COMPETENCY 2.0  THE CANDIDATE WILL APPLY INFERENTIAL AND CRITICAL LISTENING COMPREHENSION SKILLS IN ENGLISH

Skill 2.1  Inferring main ideas, details, comparisons, and cause-and-effect relationships not explicitly stated in an oral message

Many messages in English are explicit, but others require the listener to infer meaning. If ELLs understand English rhetoric, they are better prepared to listen for the main idea, details, and comparisons. A lecture session may be taped and played several times for learners to acquire the necessary understanding of an oral message. Students may pair off and compare their sheets to negotiate meaning.

Bloom’s Taxonomy divides the way people learn into three domains. One of these is the cognitive domain which emphasizes intellectual outcomes (Barton, 1997). (The other domains are the affective and the psycho-motor.) Teachers can use scaffolding techniques to guide ELLs in making inferences. Questions such as will guide the learner towards making inferences:

- What inference can you make…?
- What conclusions can you draw…?
- What evidence can you find…?
- What ideas justify …?

Skill 2.2  Drawing conclusions from information provided in an oral message

Drawing conclusions from information in an oral message is an authentic listening activity. Many ELLs, nevertheless, will not understand the message with only one exposure. ELLs can then be given the opportunity to tape a message, such as a lecture, and listen several times until comprehension is achieved. When the message is understood, they may be asked for their conclusions. This type of scaffolding should be withdrawn gradually in order to encourage a more realistic listening activity.

Barton (1997) suggests that part of analysis is reaching conclusions based on the message being received. To guide the ELL in drawing conclusions, teachers may ask questions, such as:

- What conclusions can you draw…?
- What is the relationship between…?
- Can you make a distinction between…?
- What is the function of…?
- What ideas justify..?
Skill 2.3  Interpreting a commonly used idiomatic expression

Idioms are the assigning of a new, often figurative, meaning to a group of words whose literal meaning is different. Idioms are informal, often colloquial or slang, and are frequently overused (Curry, 1989). Nevertheless, they form an important part of the English language.

Learning idioms is confusing and difficult for most ELLs. Idioms are numerous and generally taught as they are encountered. Instruction in the nature of idioms should encourage ELLs to move beyond the literal interpretation of words to their figurative meaning. To do this, teachers may encourage the illustration of popular idioms showing both their literal meaning and their figurative meaning. This helps ELLs understand that language is flexible and has been used creatively by others.

Another activity would be for teachers to give the literal meaning of an idiom in an illustrative sentence, followed by a paraphrase of the illustrative sentence. For example: In English class, Ms. Price doesn’t like for her students to “clown around”. Paraphrase: Ms. Price doesn’t like for her students to act silly.

Skill 2.4  Characterizing the tone, mood, or point of view of one or more speakers

It is common for foreign students to assign emotions to speakers based on the tone of voice being used. English is a harsh, guttural language when compared with the softer, more melodic tones of other languages, e.g. Spanish.

A fun way to convey that the English speaker really isn’t “angry” would be to have students experiment with speaking English using different emotions. Line drawings illustrating different emotions, such as anger, sadness, joy, confusion, and suspicion, could be passed out. The teacher then models each emotion and has the children to mimic them.

Another exercise is to read a short passage using one of the emotions and have the students identify it. Students can then mimic the teacher as they also read in the same tone of voice.

These exercises, not only demonstrate the emotions, but also teach new vocabulary.

Skill 2.5  Analyzing the social context of a spoken exchange or the relationship between speakers

Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS), which learners must acquire to function in social situations, are generally less demanding than Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP), and are generally acquired earlier.
Language proficiency requires both BICS and CALP. While there are clear distinctions between them, there are underlying similarities that contribute to overall language learning. In addition, students should also recognize Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP). These are skills, ideas, and concepts that learners can transfer from their first language to their English learning. Both similarities and differences between languages can help learners understand and learn aspects of English.

**Oral conversations** are generally spontaneous, and the participants make up their speech as they interact with each other. They make corrections, revise their words, and try to clear up misunderstandings as they go. At times, oral conversations may seem to be disjointed as the interlocutors bring up new and old topics with their companions.

Vygotsky (1986, 2006) argued that children learn through social interactions and that language is both social and an important facilitator of learning. Through interactions with their classmates and adults children learn things they could not learn on their own (Zebroski, 1994 in Tompkins 2009). Since children can learn from their classmates, teachers often place them in small groups for solving problems that they would be unable to do on their own. Teachers can “scaffold” their charges by model or demonstrate tasks, guide children through the task, ask questions, break complex tasks into smaller steps, and supply pieces of information.

**Skill 2.6 Assessing the sufficiency of information in an oral message**

Teachers can help ELLs judge a sufficiency of information through active listening exercises where they able to complete graphics while listening. Repeated practice will help the students understand what elements are important and what elements are of minor importance.

One technique for scaffolding the ELLs listening skills would be to have the ELLs follow a lecture or classroom presentation by taking notes to answer a set of predetermined questions. As they follow the presentation, they fill in notes in a variety of ways, such as filling in graphics, charts, balloon diagrams, etc. By seeing a visual representation of the information, they are better able to evaluate their learning and determine what additional information is needed to complete the task and gain a fuller understanding of the material.

When giving oral presentations, ELLs may need help in determining what information is important and what information is of secondary nature. Guided instruction in an outline would be valuable in helping the ELL understand how complete the presentation is.
Contemporary theories of language acquisition have a solid basis in research on many different language learners in many different cultures. These theories have led to a solid basis upon which to base teaching practice and can guide teachers in their interactions with learners of all types.

Between two and three years of age, most children will be able to use language to influence the people closest to them. Research shows that, in general, boys acquire language more slowly than girls, which means we need to consider carefully how we involve boys in activities designed to promote early language and literacy.

Various theories have tried to explain the language acquisition process.

**VYGOTSKY: SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND LANGUAGE**

Unlike Chomsky and Piaget, Vygotsky's central focus is the relationship between the development of thought and language. He was interested in the ways different languages affect a person's thinking. He suggests that what Piaget saw as the young child's egocentric speech was actually private speech, the child's way of using words to think about something, which progressed from social speech to thinking in words. Vygotsky views language first as social communication, which gradually promotes both language itself and cognition.

**CHOMSKY: THE UNIVERSAL HYPOTHESIS**

Chomsky's theory, described as nativism, asserts that humans are born with a special biological brain mechanism, called a Language Acquisition Device (LAD). His theory supposes that the ability to learn language is innate, that nature is more important than nurture, and that experience using language is only necessary in order to activate the LAD. Chomsky based his assumptions on work in linguistics. His work shows that children's language development is much more complex than what is proposed by behaviorist theory, which asserts that children learn language merely by being rewarded for imitating. However, Chomsky's theory underestimates the influence that thought (cognition) and language have on each other's development.
PINKER: LANGUAGE INSTINCT
Pinker argues that humans are born with an innate capacity for language. He states that language is an instinct as children are able to learn language because the “basic organization of grammar is wired into their brains” through biological evolution. Pinker claims language was created by evolution to solve communication problems among social hunter-gathers. He believes language is universal, but the specific structures in the brain are active during a specific critical period of childhood after which they are disassembled allowing the brain to use this energy for other purposes. Pinker disagrees with theorists who assert that language and thought are the same. He says that they are separate both in the genes and in the mind from other instincts that comprise the human mind.

KRASHEN: THE MONITOR MODEL
Krashen’s Monitor Model consists of 5 main hypotheses.

- **The Acquisition/Learning Hypothesis**: Distinguishes between “acquisition”, a subconscious event resulting from natural communication where emphasis is on communication and “learning” which occurs as the result of conscious study of formal properties of language.
- **The Natural Order Hypothesis**: Claims learners follow a more or less invariable path when learning a language and that grammatical structures are acquired in a predictable order.
- **The Monitor Hypothesis**: States a learner uses an internal Monitor to edit “learned” language production. The conditions must include: sufficient time, focus on form and not on meaning, and the user must know the grammar rule.
- **The Input Hypothesis**: Is based on Krashen’s belief that “acquisition” takes place when the learner is exposed to comprehensible input a little beyond the learner’s current level of competence, or at “I + 1”.
- **The Affective Filter Hypothesis**: Controls the amount of input a learner comes in contact with and how much of that input is becomes intake. The Affective Filter is low in learners with high motivation and self-confidence, but high in learners with low motivation and self-confidence. The Affective Filter does not affect the route of language development.

CUMMINS: BICS AND CALPS
Cummins distinguishes between Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALPS). BICS are the “surface” skills that language students acquire quickly. CALPS are skills needed to perform in an academic setting. Cummins states that children can acquire BICS in approximately 2 years of immersion in the target language, CALPS need between 5-7 years to develop.

PIAGET: COGNITIVE CONSTRUCTIVISM
Piaget’s central interest was children’s cognitive development. He theorized that language is simply one way that children represent their familiar worlds, a reflection
of thought, and that language does not contribute to the development of thinking. He believed that cognitive development precedes language development.

**RECENT THEORIZING: INTENTIONALITY**

Some contemporary researchers and theorists criticize earlier theories and suggest that children, their behaviors, and their attempts to understand and communicate are misunderstood when the causes of language development are thought to be “outside” the child or mechanistically “in the child's brain.” They recognize that children are active learners who co-construct their worlds. Children’s language development is part of their holistic development, emerging from cognitive, emotional, and social interactions. These theorists believe that language development depends on the child’s social and cultural environment, the people in it, and their interactions. The way children represent these factors in their minds is fundamental to language development. They believe that a child's agenda and the interactions generated by the child promote language learning. The adult's role, actions, and speech are still considered important, but adults need to be able to “mind read” and adjust their side of the co-construction to relate to an individual child's understanding and interpretation.

Theories about language development help us see that enjoying “proto-conversations” with babies (treating them as people who understand, share, and have intentions in sensitive interchanges), and truly listening to young children are the best ways to promote their language development.

**Brain research** has shown that the single most important factor affecting language acquisition is the onset of puberty. Before puberty, a person uses one area of the brain for language learning; after puberty, a different area of the brain is used. A person who learns a second language before reaching puberty will always process language learning as if prepubescent. A person who begins to learn a second language after the onset of puberty will likely find language learning more difficult and depend more on repetition.

Other researchers have focused on analyzing aspects of the language to be acquired. Factors they consider include:

- **Error analysis:** Recognizing patterns of errors
- **Interlanguage:** Analyzing which aspects of the target language are universal
- **Developmental patterns:** The order in which features of a language are acquired and the sequence in which a specific feature is acquired

**Skill 3.2 Characteristics of various stages of first- and second language acquisition**

Language acquisition is a gradual, hierarchical, and cumulative process. This means that learners must go through and master each stage in sequence, much as Piaget theorized for learning in general. In terms of syntax, this means learners must
acquire specific grammatical structures, first recognizing the difference between subject and predicate; putting subject before predicate; and then learning more complex variations, such as questions, negatives, and relative clauses.

While learners much pass through each stage and accumulate the language skills learned progressively at each stage, learners use different approaches to mastering these skills. Some learners use more cognitive processing procedures; more of their learning takes place through thought processes. Other learners tend to use psycholinguistic procedures, processing learning through more speaking. Regardless of how learners process information, they must all proceed through the same stages, from the least to the most complicated.

Experts disagree on the exact definition of the phases, but a set of six general stages would include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Single words</td>
<td>I; throw; ball</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. SVO structure</td>
<td>I throw the ball.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wh-fronting</td>
<td>Where you are?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do fronting</td>
<td>Do you like me?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adverb fronting</td>
<td>Today I go to school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative + verb</td>
<td>She is not nice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copula (linking v) inversion</td>
<td>Is he at school?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Particle shift</td>
<td>Take your hat off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Do 2nd</td>
<td>Why did she leave?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aux 2nd</td>
<td>Where has he gone?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neg do 2nd</td>
<td>She does not live here.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Cancel inversion</td>
<td>I asked what she was doing.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each progressive step requires the learner to use knowledge from the previous step, as well as new knowledge of the language. As ELLs progress to more advanced stages of syntax, they may react differently, depending on their ability to acquire the new knowledge that is required for mastery.

**Skill 3.3** Cognitive processes involved in internalizing language rules and learning vocabulary in a second language (e.g., memorization, categorization, metacognition)

**COGNITIVE STRATEGIES**
Cognitive strategies are vital to second-language acquisition; their most salient feature is the manipulation of the second language. The most basic strategies are: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output, which can be remembered by the acronym PRAC.
Practicing: Practice constant repetition, make attempts to imitate a native speaker’s accent, concentrate on sounds, and practice in a realistic setting to help promote the learner’s grasp of the language.

Receiving and sending messages: These strategies help the learner quickly locate salient points and then interpret the meaning: skim through information to determine “need to know” vs. “nice to know,” use available resources (print and non-print) to interpret messages.

Analyzing and reasoning: Use general rules to understand the meaning and then work into specifics, and break down unfamiliar expressions into parts.

Creating structure for input and output: Choose a format for taking meaningful notes; practice summarizing long passages; use highlighters as a way to focus on main ideas or important specific details.

METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES
The ESOL teacher is responsible for helping students become aware of their own individual learning strategies and constantly improve and add to those strategies. Each student should have his/her own toolbox of skills for planning, managing, and evaluating the language-learning process.

Some salient points for ELLs to keep in mind:

- Center your learning: Review a key concept or principle and link it to existing knowledge, make a firm decision to pay attention to the general concept, ignore input that is distracting, and learn skills in the proper order.
- Arrange and plan your learning: Take the time to understand how a language is learned; create optimal learning conditions, i.e., regulate noise, lighting, and temperature; obtain the appropriate books, etc.; and set reasonable long- and short-term goals.
- Evaluate your learning: Keep track of errors that prevent further progress and keep track of progress, e.g., reading faster now than the previous month.

SOCIOAFFECTIVE STRATEGIES
Socioaffective strategies are broken down into affective and social strategies. Affective strategies are those that help the learner control the emotions and attitudes that hinder progress in learning the second language and at the same time help him/her learn to interact in a social environment. There are three sets of affective strategies—lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, and taking your emotional temperature—which are easy to remember with the acronym LET.

- Lowering your anxiety: These strategies try to maintain emotional equilibrium with physical activities: Use meditation and/or deep breathing to relax, listen to calming music, and read a funny book or watch a comedy.
- Encouraging yourself: These strategies help support and motivate the learner. Stay positive through self-affirmations, take risks, and give yourself rewards.
• **Taking your emotional temperature**: These strategies help learners control their emotions by understanding what they are feeling emotionally as well as why they are feeling that way. Listen to your body’s signals; create a checklist to keep track of feelings and motivations during the second-language-acquisition process; keep a diary to record progress and feelings; and share feelings with a classmate or friend.

**Social strategies** affect how the learner interacts in a social setting. The following are three useful strategies for interacting socially: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others, which can be remembered with the acronym ACE.

- **Asking questions**: Ask for clarification or help. Request that the speaker slow down, repeat, or paraphrase, and ask to be corrected when you are speaking.
- **Cooperating with others**: Interact with more than one person: Work cooperatively with a partner or small group and work with a native speaker of the language.
- **Empathizing with others**: Learn how to relate to others, remembering that people usually have more things in common than things that set them apart. Empathize with another student by learning about his/her culture and being aware and sensitive to his/her thoughts and feelings. Understanding and empathizing will help the other student but it will also help the empathizer.

**PRIOR KNOWLEDGE**

**Schemata**, or the prior knowledge students have when beginning a new foreign language, is a valuable asset to be exploited in their language learning. The schema theory (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983) explains how the brain processes knowledge and how this facilitates comprehension and learning. A schema is the framework around information that is stored in the brain. As new information is received, schemata are activated to store the new information. By connecting what is known with what is being learned, understanding is achieved and learning can take place. If students lack sufficient prior knowledge, they cannot be expected to understand a new lesson.

Children may or may not have prior educational experiences upon which to build their new language skills. However, even children who have little or no formal education may have been taught the alphabet or simple mathematics by their parents. Children from oral cultures may have quite sophisticated language structures already in place upon which to base new language learning.

**COGNITIVE/LEARNING STYLES**

A student’s learning style includes cognitive, affective, and psychological behaviors that indicate his/her characteristic and consistent way of perceiving, interacting with, and responding to the learning environment (Willing, 1988).
Willing identified four main learning styles used by ESL learners in Australia:

- **Concrete learning style**: People-oriented, emotional, and spontaneous
- **Analytic learning style**: Object-oriented, with the capacity for making connections and inferences
- **Communicative learning style**: Autonomous, prefers social learning, likes making decisions
- **Authority-oriented learning style**: Defers to the teacher, does not enjoy learning by discovery, intolerant of facts that do not fit (ambiguity)

Reid (1987) identified four perceptual learning tendencies:

- **Visual learning**: Learning mainly from seeing words in books, on the board, etc.
- **Auditory learning**: Learning by hearing words spoken and from oral explanations, from listening to tapes or lectures
- **Kinesthetic learning**: Learning by experience, by being involved physically in classroom experiences
- **Tactile learning**: Hands-on learning, learning by doing, working on models, lab experiments, etc.

**Skill 3.4** Factors affecting second-language acquisition (e.g., age, motivation, learning style, environmental factors) and the role of the first language in second-language development (e.g., language transfer, interlanguage development)

While there is a continuous effort to establish a “Standard English” to be taught for English Language Learners (ELLs), English learning and acquisition depends on the cultural and linguistic background of the ELL, as well as preconceived perceptions of English Language cultural influences. These factors can act as a filter, causing confusion and inhibiting learning. Since language by definition is an attempt to share knowledge, the cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of learners influences both their own history as well as how they approach and learn a new language.

Teachers must assess the ELL to determine how cultural, ethnic, and linguistic experience can impact the student’s learning. This evaluation should take into account many factors, including:

- The cultural background and educational sophistication of the ELL
- The exposure of the ELL to various English language variants and cultural beliefs

No single approach, program, or set of practices fits all students’ needs, backgrounds, and experiences. The ideal program for a Native American teenager attending an isolated tribal school may fail to reach a Hispanic youth enrolled in an inner city or suburban district.
CULTURAL FACTORS

Culture encompasses the sum of human activity and symbolic structures that have significance and importance for a particular group of people. Culture is manifested in language, customs, history, arts, beliefs, institutions and other representative characteristics, and is a means of understanding the lives and actions of people.

Customs play an important part in language learning because they directly affect interpersonal exchanges. What is polite in one culture might be offensive in another. For example, in the U. S., making direct eye contact is considered polite and not to make eye contact connotes deviousness, inattention, or rude behavior. The custom in many Asian cultures is exactly the opposite. Teachers who are unaware of this cultural difference can easily offend an Asian ELL and unwittingly cause a barrier to learning. However, teachers who are familiar with this custom can make efforts not to offend the learner and can teach the difference between the two customs so that the ELL can learn how to interact without allowing contrary customs to interfere.

Beliefs and institutions have a strong emotional influence on ELLs and should always be respected. While customs should be adaptable, similar to switching registers when speaking, no effort should be made to change the beliefs or institutional values of an ELL. Presenting new ideas is a part of growth, learning, and understanding. Even though the beliefs and values of different cultures often have irreconcilable differences, they should be addressed. In these instances teachers must respect alternative attitudes and adopt an "agree to disagree" attitude. Presenting new, contrasting points of view should not be avoided because new ideas can strengthen original thinking as well as change it. All presentations should be neutral, however, and no effort should be made to alter a learner’s thinking. While addressing individual cultural differences, teachers should also teach tolerance of all cultures. This attitude is especially important in a culturally diverse classroom, but will serve all students well in their future interactions.

Studying the history and various art forms of a culture reveals much about the culture and offers opportunities to tap into the interests and talents of ELLs. Comparing the history and art of different cultures encourages critical thinking and often reveals commonalities as well as differences, leading to greater understanding among people.

Culture constitutes a rich component of language learning. It offers a means of drawing learners into the learning process and greatly expands their understanding of a new culture, as well as their own. Second language acquisition, according to the findings of Saville-Troike (1986), places the learner in the position of having to learn a second culture. The outcome of learning a second culture can have negative or positive results, not only depending on how teaching is approached, but also outside factors. How people in the new culture respond to ELLs makes them feel welcome or rejected. The attitudes and behavior of the learner’s family are particularly important. If the family is supportive and embraces the second culture, then the effect is typically positive. However, if acculturation is perceived as rejecting the primary culture, then the child risks feeling alienated from both cultures.