In education, as in other areas of our social life, the dream that Martin Luther King was referring to - the dream for equity in our country – has not yet been achieved. However, “in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment,” it is extremely important that we continue to hold fast to this dream, that we continue to work hard to make it come true in education. That is what this book is about. It is about how to create schools in which the dream of equity comes alive on an every day basis through the work of ordinary, everyday people, just like you and us.

In striving for both equity and excellence, we are aiming to create schools in which virtually all students are learning at high academic levels. We are aiming for schools in which there are no persistent patterns of differences in academic success or treatment among students grouped by race, ethnicity, culture, neighborhood, income of parents, or home language. In other words, we are aiming to foster schools that literally serve each and every student really well.

Let us illustrate what we mean. Suppose you are the principal or a teacher in an elementary or secondary school serving children who are diverse by race, income of parents, culture, home language, and so forth. Suppose almost all of your students are at or above grade level in their academic achievement. Suppose your school achieved this not by drill and kill, not by becoming a test prep factory (i.e., spending the whole school year teaching to a state accountability test), but by having staff, parents, and students work together to learn how children in your school can be successfully taught.

Thus, in your school, the middle-class children do not do better academically than the children of low income parents. The white children do not do better than the children of color. In your school, virtually all children achieve at high levels, and there is no discernable difference in academic success among different groups of students. Your school, in short, is what we mean by an equitable and excellent school.

However, we understand that many people, including educators and school leaders, do not believe that such schools are possible. We know this. We run into it constantly as we speak in various venues all across the country. Many, many people - including university scholars, campus and district administrators, and classroom teachers - just don’t believe it is possible to create schools that are both equitable and excellent.

This disbelief, this resistance to the very possibility of equity, reminds us of many other situations in which, at first, people did not believe that something was possible, but then some people decided that it was; they then did “the impossible,” eventually making the achievement ordinary. Not too long ago, many people believed that women could not succeed in college and become doctors, lawyers, jet pilots, or CEOs of major corporations, but women hold all of these positions today (certainly not as commonly as we would want, but more commonly than before).
A Social View of Teaching and Learning

Two Views of Learning

Since public education began, there have been two major and competing ideologies about the goals of education and the means by which it is to be accomplished (Wells 1999, 2000). The first of these can be described as the “empty vessel” model of teaching and learning, or what Freire (1983) referred to as the “banking” model. Teachers are seen to “deposit” skills or knowledge in the empty memory banks of their students. The teaching-learning relationship is one of transmission and reception – transmission of a body of knowledge by the teacher, and the reception of this knowledge by the students. Language, if it is thought about at all, is seen simply as a conduit or carrier of knowledge.

The second ideology, often referred to as “progressive,” appears at one level to be very different. In opposition to the ideology of transmission, the learner is placed at the center of the educational process. Based on the work of Dewey and more recently, Piaget, education is seen not as a matter of receiving information but of intelligent inquiry and thought. In the way that this has been interpreted in some classrooms, the major organizing principle is seen to be the individual child’s active construction of knowledge, with the teacher’s role being the stage-manage appropriate learning experiences. In the model of learning, action is primary, and a child’s language abilities are seen as largely the result of more general and cognitive abilities.

Both orientations have been critiqued from the standpoint of minority students and second language learners (Cummins 1996, 2000). Transmission models tend to work against what is generally accepted as one of the central principles of language learning: namely that using the language in interaction with others is an essential process by which it is learned (see Painter 1985 on mother-tongue development and Swain 1995 on second language development). Transmission pedagogies are also criticized as presenting a curriculum sited solely within the dominant culture, providing little or no opportunity for minority students to express their particular experiences and non-mainstream view of the world. Unfortunately, transmission-based approaches have tended to dominate the education of so-called disadvantaged students, and many compensatory programs have tended to focus on drilling students in low-level language and numeracy skills, effectively structuring ongoing disadvantage into the curriculum of the school (Oakes 1985). Much progressive pedagogy has also been criticized, in particular for its lack of explicit language teaching, which, it has been argued, places a disadvantage on those who are least familiar with the language and assumptions of a middle-class school curriculum (Delpit 1988; Martin 1989; Kalantzis, Cope, Noble, and Poynting 1991). In relation to the teaching of writing, such approaches have been criticized in particular for their focus on the processes of language learning, at the expense of focusing sufficiently on the production of written texts. Ultimately, it is argued, the broader social realities of life beyond school require that students will need to be able to control the language that will allow them to participate in the dominant society. This is a powerful argument and is taken up again in Chapter 4.
In reality, both transmission and progressive orientations exist in schools, sometimes together in the same classroom. This is not to be critical of teachers. Rather, it points to the inadequacy of the most common models of learning within which teachers are expected to work. In fact, though very different in the way that they view learning and the role of the teacher, both ideologies have what is essentially an individualistic notion of learning. Whether you view the learner as an empty vessel waiting to be filled with appropriate knowledge, or as an unfolding intellect that will eventually reach its potential given the right environment, both views see the learner as independent and self-contained, and learning as occurring within an individual. This book suggests an alternative model, one that foregrounds the collaborative nature of learning and language development between individuals, the interrelatedness of the roles of teacher and learner, and the active roles of both in the learning process.

Excerpt from *Educating English Learners for a Transformed World, 2009, p. 10-11*

By Virginia P. Collier and Wayne P. Thomas

**Court decisions**

**Basic rights.** The basic rights of linguistically diverse students are based on three major foundations in U.S. law. First, the U.S. Supreme Court’s interpretation of the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution guarantees all persons equal protection under the laws of the United States. Second, Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 bans discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any federally assisted program. Third, the Equal Educational Opportunities Act of 1974 requires that all public school districts must “take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in its instructional programs” (Ovando, Combe & Collier, 2006, p. 74). All U.S. court decisions focused on the educational needs of linguistically diverse students who are English learners have been based on and have extended the interpretations of these basic rights.

**Hernández v. Texas** (1954). This legal decision was a landmark U.S. Supreme Court case, ruling that Mexican Americans and all other ethnic groups in the United States have equal protection under the 14th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Since the 14th Amendment explicitly focuses on equal protection for whites and blacks, this case extended these rights to other ethnic minorities in this ruling.

**Lau v. Nichols** (1974). The landmark U.S. Supreme Court decision, *Lau v. Nichols* continues to be the most significant federal court decision defining legal responsibilities of schools serving English learners. The key issue in this important ruling is defined as providing a *meaningful education*. Just teaching the mainstream curriculum in English is not considered meaningful.

There is no equality of treatment merely by providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum; for students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education.

Basic English skills are at the very core of what these public schools teach. Imposition of a requirement that, before a child can effectively participate in the education program, he must already have acquired those basic skills is to make a mockery of public education. We know that those who do not understand English are certain to find their classroom experiences wholly incomprehensible and in no way meaningful.

*Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas, Lau v. Nichols, 1974*
This particular lawsuit was filed by the Chinese-American community in San Francisco, and in this case the negotiated consensus agreement required that bilingual schooling be provided to keep students academically on grade level while learning English. But the key words a meaningful education may be interpreted differently in other educational contexts. In other words, *Lau v. Nichols* does not explicitly require bilingual schooling, but it does mean that school districts must provide some kind of support program for English learners that enables them to have a meaningful education.

*Castañeda v. Pickard* (1981). Extending the interpretation of what a meaningful education might be for English learners, the next most significant court decision affecting linguistically diverse students was *Castañeda v. Pickard*. This federal Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals decision in Texas has been used as a standard for all succeeding court cases as well as for Office for Civil Rights guidelines for compliance with the *Lau v. Nichols* Supreme Court decision. The *Castañeda* ruling formulated three criteria for evaluating programs serving English learners. The program must be (1) based on sound educational theory recognized by experts in the field; (2) implemented effectively, with adequate resources and personnel; and (3) evaluated and found effective in both the teaching of languages (English and students’ first language if the program is bilingual) and in access to the full curriculum (math, social studies, science). As we review program effectiveness research in the next chapters, we will be applying these evaluation criteria.

*Plyler v. Doe* (1982). One more landmark U.S. Supreme Court case should be mentioned here. *Plyler v. Doe* guarantees the rights of undocumented immigrants to free public education. Public schools are prohibited from (1) denying undocumented students admission to school, (2) requiring students or parents to disclose or document their immigration status, or (3) requiring social security numbers of all students (Carrera, 1989).

Excerpt from *Foundations for Teaching English Language Learners: Research, Theory, Policy, and Practice - Second Edition, 2015, p. 28-29*

By: Wayne E. Wright

Why Teachers Need to Know about Language

Fillmore and Snow (2000) identify five functions that teachers perform that have consequences in their work with ELLs. For teachers to perform each of these functions, they must have a thorough understanding of language.

*Teacher as communicator.* Teachers must know enough about the structure of language to speak and write so their students can understand them, and they must be able to understand what their students are saying. Understanding student talk is essential to teachers’ ability to analyze what students know, how they understand, and what teaching methods would be most useful. Effective communication with linguistically and culturally diverse students includes recognizing, valuing, and drawing on their home languages (languages other than English and nonstandard varieties of English) as resources in teaching and learning.
Teacher as educator. Teachers need to know which language problems will resolve themselves and which problems need attention and intervention. Teachers need to select or modify the language used in instruction (written and oral) to make complex content-area concepts comprehensible to ELLs at different English proficiency levels.

Teacher as evaluator. Teachers frequently make judgments based on language behaviors of students that have enormous consequences for the students’ lives. These include everyday judgments and responses that affect students’ sense of themselves as learners, as well as decisions about reading group placement, promotion, and referral for evaluation. For example, when educators mistake language differences or English language development issues for cognitive deficiencies, many ELLs and speakers of nonstandard varieties of English are inappropriately placed in special education or provided with inappropriate and ineffective interventions. Teachers must recognize the problems of using assessment instruments designed for monolingual standard English speakers. They must become skilled in the use of authentic assessment tools and procedures to accurately evaluate ELLs’ language and literacy abilities in English and in their home languages, and know how to use these results to track student progress and plan effective instruction.

Teacher as an educated human being. Teachers should understand the role of language in education and know something about the differences between the structure of English and that of other languages. Public ignorance about language and language issues has resulted in damaging policies (e.g., restrictions on bilingual education programs for ELLs in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts), public debates driven by misinformation and misunderstandings (e.g., about nonstandard varieties of English), and pedagogically unsound decisions in schools (e.g., about methods for teaching English or reading).

Teachers as agent of socialization. Students from immigrant and minority homes may find the culture of the school vastly different from the culture of their home, and the teacher may be their first contact with the social world outside the home and even, among ELLs, their first contact with English. Thus, the ways teachers organize their programs and practices helps students adjust to the everyday practices, the system of values and beliefs, and the means and manners of communication at school and in society. In this role, as in their role as communicators, teachers who respect their students’ home languages and cultures can be most effective in helping students make the necessary transitions without undercutting the role that parents and families must continue to plan in their education and development.

All classrooms are language environments, and language is at the heart of teaching and learning. To help students succeed in the classroom and in school, teachers need to “think linguistically,” that is, teachers need to “understand language as an integral element in the content they teach, the contributions that their students make in the classroom, and how these students participate in lessons and activities". (Bailey, Burkett, & Freemen, 2008, p. 609).