The Development of Teacher Expertise to Work with Adolescent English Learners: A Model and a Few Priorities

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The presence of adolescent English language learners (ELLs) in American schools has increased dramatically in the last decade and a half. Recent studies indicate that in the year 2000, ELLs in middle and high schools comprised 5.3 percent of all students nationwide, with wide variation across states: California, 11.9%; Illinois, 5.4%; Colorado, 4.4%; and North Carolina, 2.9%. As a whole, these students are underperforming and are dropping out of school in larger proportions than their native English-speaking peers. Most English learners in schools are not recent arrivals to the American school system. In fact, 57% of ELLs in middle and high schools were born in this country, have exclusively attended American schools, and represent the second or third generation of immigrants to the United States (Batalova & Fix, 2005).

The failure of schools to meet the needs of ELLs is directly linked to degrees of teacher expertise, for it is widely recognized that teachers play the most crucial role in the success or failure of their students (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Goldhaber, Brewer, & Anderson, 1999; Goldhaber, 2002). To accelerate the academic performance of all students, and in particular that of students for whom English is a new language, it is necessary for teachers to receive appropriate preparation and professional development that will enable them to create quality opportunities for English learners to develop their potential (Barron & Menken, 2002; National Educational Research Policy and Priorities Board, 1999; August & Hakuta, 1997).

English learners are students with tremendous potential. However, unless we have quality teaching in their classes, their potential will not be realized. This chapter takes a look inside effective classrooms for adolescent English learners and through a sociocultural lens analyzes how instruction is orchestrated and enacted to engage students in work that ripens their potential. Though the focus here is on middle and high schools, the ideas presented are equally applicable to the education of second-language learners in elementary schools. Data used throughout derive from work conducted for the last decade[2] studying

how ELLs—and their teachers—learn under optimal conditions. They include observations, audio- and videotaped classes, and interviews with students, parents, teachers, and administrators conducted to get a fuller picture of the impact pedagogical arrangements can have on the education of English language learners.

From this process I derived a set of 10 priorities to help teachers evaluate and improve the quality of instruction in their classrooms. Although some teachers do apply these priorities when designing and delivering instruction in classes that have English language learners, they have not always reflected on what these priorities are, nor have they systematized them as the base that undergirds their pedagogical approach. Because instruction remains frustrating for many students, not just for those learning English and content simultaneously, it is appropriate to highlight these priorities. Furthermore, those most affected by teaching and learning are seldom asked for their suggestions. Students' voices are typically absent from discussions of the quality of their schooling, yet students have valid information that can guide our critiques and plans. Thus, I included the voices of immigrant students—quotes taken from my interviews—to develop the priorities and to guide this discussion.

How each teacher articulates and implements these priorities greatly depends on the teacher's own characteristics, the characteristics of the students, local circumstances, and other relevant aspects of the context. There is no single approach applicable to every student or in every teaching situation. Varied approaches and instantiations are needed, depending on the local context (Shulman & Associates, 1995).

Ten Priorities to Guide Instruction Design for Immigrant Students

(1) Use the classroom culture to develop a community of learners to which all students belong.

> High school is hard for me because my English is so limited. Sometimes it is hard for me to do things because of my English. There are times when I feel a lot of pressure because I want to say something, but I don't know how to say it. There are many times when the teacher is asking questions, I know the answer, but I'm afraid that people might laugh at me. I know I just need to be a little patient with myself.

10th-grade student from Mexico, two years in the United States, interview in Spanish

> To me, the big issue is that we need more teachers who care about us, who treat us as human beings, who greet us and want to help us. Too many teachers don't really care. They are just doing their job, coming to school and going home.

9th-grade student from the Philippines, three years in the United States

In effective classrooms, teachers and students engage in the coconstruction of a culture that values the strengths of each person and respects their interests, abilities, languages, and dialects. Within these classrooms all participants in the class, including the teacher, move among the roles of expert, researcher, learner, and teacher, supporting themselves and others. Immigrant teenagers bring a variety of experiences to the classroom that, if correctly tapped, can serve as a springboard to new explorations that can enrich everyone's experience. As Bialystok and Hakuta (1994, p. 203) note, "The exciting challenge for teachers and learners of a second language is to construct a context for creative and

meaningful discourse by taking full advantage of the rich, personal, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of the participants."

The voices of the students quoted at the beginning of this section illustrate what happens when this culture does not exist; students feel insecure, ashamed, and unwelcome. The establishment of a respectful, nourishing, and challenging culture with high expectations for everyone is a sine qua non for the success of English learners. Also necessary is the understanding that in a classroom with a warm, accepting climate, it is not embarrassing to admit one's limitations. As Jesús, the struggling reader in Ferreiro, Pellicer, Rodríguez, Silva, & Vernon (1991, p. 8) admitted, as he volunteered to continue the read-aloud in class: "Yo leo, es que yo no sé leer bien...para enseñarme [I read...I do not know how to read well... so that I can teach myself]." Jesús understood that in his class it is acceptable to confess one's inability to read well. He also knows (i.e., he has been taught) that one learns to read by reading. If Jesús wanted the opportunity to practice, he deserved to have that opportunity. The other students in the classroom were attentive and patient, even though Jesús's reading was not very clear, because they understood that their attention would help him become a better reader. They understood this because they had been explicitly taught that their support of peers was an important norm that characterized the classroom.

Lave & Wenger's (1991) concept of *peripheral legitimate participation* is relevant to the notion of community building and learning in a classroom. When English language learners join a class in English, the teacher represents the community of practice of which the students want to become members: people who are knowledgeable about the subject matter and proficient in English. These students are peripheral to the central activity they are being apprenticed into, but for their education to be successful, they must be treated as legitimate participants in the activity and the target community. That is, although they are all newcomers to the language and many of them to American schools, they need to be treated from the beginning as the central participants they will become. To become competent, they need to be considered as such. If a new student is greeted by a teacher who seems to convey his or her belief that education in English will be very hard, or unattainable for them, students are delegitimized by the teacher. In turn, they will take on oppositional behaviors and will reject schooling. This is one of the reasons why so many English learners drop out of school.

Although expectations for all learners need to be high, it should also be understood that all students will not progress at the same pace or in the same ways but will move differentially toward the attainment of common goals supported by collective norms and practices. As a student confessed to me when I visited International High School (IHS), one of the premier schools for English learners in the country,

> Teachers at IHS really care about how we treat other students. They tell us to understand them, especially if they don't have a high level in English. We always support them, talk to them so that they do not feel so lonely because we also passed through those things. When you are away from home the first thing that worries you is how other people are going to treat you. Here in this school everybody makes me feel comfortable, not like in other schools where they make you feel like you are the worst thing in the world... .

Angela Pérez, video interview, April 2002

(2) Foster teaching that promotes students' conceptual and academic development.

> Why did I leave school? In most classes they give you lists of words to memorize and worksheets to complete. You see students in regular classes reading interesting books. Not us. Teachers say: When you learn English you will be able to read. But that didn't happen the three years I spent in school.

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17-year-old from El Salvador

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> When I entered the regular English classes, I found they were much more difficult than the ESL classes. It made me feel that I didn't walk, but jumped from the ESL to regular classes. I had to study very hard to recover the gap. I wish schools can have a better ESL program so the transition is easier.

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Mainstreamed student from Vietnam

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Effective English as a second language (ESL) classes, even at beginning levels, can focus on themes and can develop skills that are relevant for teenagers and for their studies in mainstream academic classes. Students are not helped if what they study is trivial or is presented to them atomistically. Instead, teachers can discuss similarities and differences in families around the world, even in the first week of class. In this way they can help students develop vocabulary that will prove useful in other classes later on, such as *structure, nuclear, extended, role,* and *responsibility.* Likewise, if the teacher presents a minilecture and shows students how to take notes—for example, by helping them draw the family tree of a student she or he has just described—they can learn academic skills (e.g., note taking) that can be transferred to other contexts. Immigrant students need to learn not only new content but also the language and discourse associated with each discipline. Such explicit teaching prepares immigrant students for the genre-specific language associated with the discipline of their content classes.

Effective teaching prepares students for high-quality academic work by focusing their attention on key processes and ideas and by engaging them in interactive tasks in which they can practice using these processes and concepts. ESL and subject-matter teachers need to know what linguistic and cognitive demands they are preparing their students for and develop the necessary linguistic, cognitive, and academic proficiencies. Content-area teachers need to determine what knowledge in their field is crucial and what is not. It is not uncommon to hear secondary school teachers say they teach a specific point because the program calls for it or because it is the next point in the curriculum. Because of an overreliance on curricula and textbooks, teachers are sometimes more focused on getting through them by the end of the semester or year, or on not skipping some part of them, than they are on what students are learning or need to learn (see, e.g., Ball & Rundquist, 1993).

One of the most serious challenges subject-matter teachers face in their teaching is how to use mainstream texts with their second-language learners or what kind of disciplinary language to use in their lectures and directions. One solution to the problems has been to use simplified texts—oral or written—but this solution does not work because it does not really prepare students for mainstream courses. Instead, what teachers need to consider is how they can keep the difficulty of the text constant while graduating the assistance they provide specific groups of students to access its content by using adequate scaffolding. Appropriate scaffolding enables students to participate in activities that are beyond their current level of ability to understand on their own. To achieve this, rather than simplifying a text, teachers

should amplify and enrich the linguistic and extralinguistic context that enables students to work with new concepts and relationships packaged in new language. With this amplification, students will not just get one opportunity to understand the new concepts but will be able to construct their understanding on the basis of multiple cues (Walqui, 2003, p. 111). Gibbons (2003) calls this practice the building of *linguistic abundancy.*

(3) Use students' experiential background as a point of departure and an anchor in the exploration of new ideas.

> Now that I am learning English I feel that Spanish is the most helpful way I can learn my second language because you are always comparing how you say things in your first and your new language. … That is why this linguistics project is so useful, comparing how children learn their first language and how I am learning English now. Also, it is good that our school likes us to use our native languages. If I was in a school where teachers would not let me use my Spanish I would be feeling so bad because I think it is a right to use your own language when you are learning in a second language to learn new things, I wouldn't be happy there … I would be trying to find an international high school.

Colombian student, 16 years old

> Why was I sent to the office? There is this new girl in class, and I was helping her because she does not understand a thing that goes on. I thought I did not, either, but when Carmen asked me for help I realized I did, and I was explaining to her in Spanish, and the teacher got mad. She said, "Don't you know I do not understand Spanish?" And I answered, "So? Carmen needs help." But I got a referral.

15-year-old from Mexico, 28 months in the United States

Immigrant adolescents know a great deal about the world, and this knowledge can provide the basis for understanding new concepts in a new language. However, the knowledge they already have is often overlooked because of the misconception that students who have studied elsewhere or have not had previous formal schooling are tabulae rasae on which knowledge needs to be imprinted. The tendency to see immigrant students as blank slates derives in part from their minority status: Because they hold a subordinated and less prestigious position in society, they are not perceived as possessing valuable knowledge.

Another reason that teachers do not tap into students' prior knowledge during instruction is the traditional transmission model of teaching, which assumes that it is the teacher's role to pass on important knowledge to students, whom it is assumed lack it.

Students will learn new concepts and language only when these are firmly built on previous knowledge and understanding. Tharp and Gallimore (1988, p. 108) define comprehension as involving "the weaving of new information into existing mental structures." As students realize that their everyday knowledge is not only valued in class but is also desired, a sense of trust and competence is achieved that promotes further development. This does not come easily at first. Some students have been socialized into lecture and recitation approaches to teaching, and they expect teachers' monologues to tell them what lessons are about. However, after engaging in activities that involve predicting, inferring based on prior knowledge, and supporting conclusions with evidence, they realize that they can learn actively and that working in this way is fun and stimulating.

Table 6.1 Compare and contrast matrix

	Our School	Esmeralda's School
Different groups of students visible in the school (use the names they are given by other students)		
What are some of the characteristics that make them stand out as different from other groups?		
How are the different groups of students valued by the adults in the school?		
How are they perceived by their peers?		

If understanding involves weaving new information into preexisting structures of meaning, then teachers must help English learners see connections through a variety of activities. In preparation for reading a selection from Esmeralda Santiago's (1994) *When I was Puerto Rican*, a teacher may invite students to work in groups and to jot down what they know about their school in the first column of the compare-and-contrast matrix (Table 6.1), which serves as a way of organizing the retrieval of students' prior knowledge in advance of new work.

The teacher explains what kind of information she or he expects in each cell and then reminds students to only jot down words and phrases in the organizer, not to write complete sentences. Students work in groups of four filling in the chart. As they collaboratively discuss what may be appropriate information, their thoughts are focused on their school, its many student groups, and the different evaluation they receive from adults and peers. Then the teacher distributes the selection from the book where the author narrates her first experience in a middle school in New York City, when she was sent to the lowest-tracked class, section 8-23. Because students have activated their prior knowledge about school hierarchies, they will now have a conceptual basis that will serve as a bridge to the understanding of the Santiago selection.

The use of advance organizers serves several purposes: It promotes schema building before a topic is introduced; it focuses learners' attention on important aspects of the information

to come; and, if the diagram is used for note-taking purposes, it alleviates students' anguish by letting them know beforehand what information they should be able to understand and take notes on. Students in general, and English learners in particular, need to be able to process information from the top down (i.e., to have general knowledge of the broad picture before studying the details) as well as from the bottom up (i.e., vocabulary, syntax, and rhetorical devices to understand the language). Furthermore, by viewing the skeleton of a passage in advance, students' apprehension is lowered, helping them tolerate ambiguity and encouraging them to be willing and accurate guessers. Rubin (1975) argues that these are some of the most important qualities of a good language learner.

The effective teaching of second-language learners also involves Vygotsky's (1978) concept that "the only 'good' learning is that which is in advance of development." The zone of proximal development (ZPD), that area of potential growth the learner may enter if given the right kind of support. In this process, social interaction is essential. Bruner (1986) extends this notion with the concept of *interactional scaffolding*: instruction that enables students to take risks safely and to extend their abilities with the help of their teachers and peers. Scaffolds are used as support mechanisms to allow English learners to handle tasks involving language that is too complex for them to understand or produce. Without such support, students might not succeed. Scaffolds are temporary; that is, as the teacher observes that students are capable of understanding and producing language on their own, responsibility is gradually handed over to them. *Kidwatching,* to use Goodman's (1978) apt expression, implies that the teacher carefully monitors each learner's growing understanding and developing academic skills, providing scaffolds and challenges as the need arises. Rather than simplified tasks or language, English language learners require amplification and enrichment of the linguistic and extralinguistic context. With this type of instruction they do not have just one opportunity to come to terms with the concepts to be learned but instead may construct their understanding on the basis of multiple clues and perspectives encountered in a variety of class activities.

A strength that adolescent teenagers bring to this country is age-appropriate communicative competence in their own languages. This knowledge can be helpful at times for the negotiation of classroom concepts that may be inaccessible otherwise. Let us imagine, for example, a student from Russia who has lived in the United States for several years and has consequently developed the ability to understand most of what goes on in his science class. A recently arrived student from Russia has joined his class. Occasional interactions in Russian between these two students can be beneficial for the newcomer when his efforts to make sense of concepts and processes in English are met with failure. If the teacher treats these interactions in Russian as productive, while at the same time scaffolding her or his instruction for the new student enough so that he can—besides using his native language—also participate in English tasks, the teacher will be validating the importance of the student's prior knowledge and enhancing his opportunities to construct new understandings in a supportive climate. As Angela Pérez's previous quote illustrates, this is not only good pedagogy; it is also a human right.

At times, as Pérez reveals, a teacher may become suspicious of students having brief interactions in class in a language the teacher cannot understand and may interpret these interactions as rebellious behavior. Understanding that students scaffold for each other through these exchanges in their native language can help teachers to put similar incidents in perspective. The incident illustrates how helping the newcomer helped the more

experienced student to realize that she understands more about the subject than she would have previously given herself credit for.

(4) Focus teaching and learning on substantive ideas that are organized cyclically.

> I used to get very upset because I couldn't understand everything the teacher said. I just stopped listening. But Ms. Long always gives us the main points before she explains or we read, and then a few days later she touches on the same topics but with different materials. Now I know if I am patient, I can understand everything that is important.

10th-grade student from Brazil, two and a half years in the United States

> I love the themes in our ESL book because you read about the same problems in many different stories, and you understand them better every time. I think all classes should be in themes.

Polish student, in the second year in an American school

Working effectively with English learners requires that teachers select from the many themes that compose a subject area the ones central to the discipline. Schwab (1964) calls these themes *substantive* and connects them to the syntactic structures of a field, which include the canons of evidence and proof that are shared by subject matter communities. These key concepts form the basis of the curriculum taught. They should not be organized in a linear progression of items, but rather the curriculum should be based on the cyclical reintroduction of concepts at progressively higher levels of complexity and interrelatedness. Cyclical organization of subject matter leads to a natural growth in the understanding of ideas and to gradual correction of misunderstandings. The concern for immediate comprehension, an assumption of linear curricula, negates what we know about learning. As Gardner (1989, p. 158), speaking of education in general, says,

> First of all, when you are trying to present new materials, you cannot expect them to be grasped immediately. (If they are, in fact, the understanding had probably been present all along.) One must approach the issues in many different ways over a significant period of time if there is to be any hope of assimilation.

As we develop the academic skills of immigrant students, we also need to inform them about this cyclical aspect of the learning process to help ease their frustration over not mastering new content and skills immediately. Furthermore, if teachers carefully choose the key concepts to be explored in class, these will serve to generate future understanding as students progress in their schooling and in English.

(5) Contextualize new ideas and tasks.

> When I first read the poem "Rayford's Song" I did not really understand it. I knew it presented a painful situation for a student but did not completely understand why. Then the teacher asked us to prepare a Mind Mirror in our groups of four showing what was going on in Rayford's mind by using two quotes, two phrases we created, two symbols, and two drawings. Discussing how to draw the picture of the boy's mind, how to select good quotes, and how to draw relevant pictures helped me understand how cruel his teacher was. Rayford only spoke one time, but he spoke very well.

9th-grade student from Somalia, three years in the United States

In my chemistry class I can always do well because the teacher first demonstrates an experiment, and then we try a similar one. Then he asks us to write down the procedure and the conclusions in groups of two or four. I can do it. I can even use the new words because I know what they mean.

10th-grade student from Chile, three years in the United States

English language learners often have problems in classes trying to make sense of decontextualized language. This situation is especially acute in the reading of textbooks. Secondary school textbooks are usually linear, dry, and dense, with few illustrations. Embedding the language of textbooks in a meaningful context by using manipulatives, pictures, a few minutes of a film, and other types of realia can make language input comprehensible for students. It is sometimes assumed that contextualization consists of using pictures to help convey ideas, but any sensory environment created to illuminate new information helps to contextualize new language and concepts. Teachers may provide verbal contextualizations by creating analogies based on students' experiences. This, of course, requires that teachers find out about students' backgrounds, as a metaphor or analogy that may work well with English speakers may not clarify meanings for English language learners. In this sense, good teachers of immigrant students continually search for metaphors and analogies that bring complex ideas closer to the students' world experience. With the increasing availability of CD-ROM, the Internet, and other new technologies in schools, it is essential that teachers of immigrant students learn to use them. They are especially suitable for use with immigrant students because the teacher can select and sequence material for particular groups of students that provides a rich textual, visual, and auditory basis for understanding.

(6) Explicitly teach academic strategies, sociocultural expectations, and academic norms.

Because this school is only for immigrant students, we do not know how American high schools work. So, at the beginning of the year, the seniors prepare an orientation week for the ninth graders where they tell us everything about the school, what we have to do, what we cannot do, how to study for classes, how teachers teach, and what they expect from students. It is really nice. I remember when I first came to the States, this was my first school, but there was a Rumanian girl who was a senior, and she could explain things to me in Rumanian. Now I am looking forward to helping a new student or some new students next year.

11th-grade student from Rumania, three years in the United States

What I really love about my ESL teacher is that she explains to us how to organize our thoughts and how to write in school ways. She also teaches us what to do to be good, critical readers. That is so helpful in my other classes, and I know it will be good for life.

10th-grade student from Mexico, two years in the United States

Effective teachers develop students' sense of autonomy through the explicit teaching of strategies, or plans of attack, that enable them to approach academic tasks successfully. The teaching of such metacognitive strategies is a way of scaffolding instruction; the goal is to hand over responsibility to the learner and to automatize the necessary skills. In reading, for example, instruction in strategies such as reciprocal teaching can be very successful in helping students construct their understandings of English texts. In reciprocal teaching

(Brown & Palincsar, 1985; Palincsar, David, & Brown, 1992), a teacher and a group of students take turns leading a dialogue aimed at revealing the meaning of a text. During this dialogue, the assigned teacher, an adult or a student, summarizes the content, asks questions concerning the gist of the reading, clarifies misunderstandings, and predicts future content, all of which involve comprehension—fostering and monitoring strategies. Teachers need to judge if their English learners are ready to engage in reciprocal teaching and scaffold the activity as needed. For example, initial practice in reciprocal teaching may focus on how to summarize a text and ask good questions. From then on, other components can be added.

The discourse of power—the language used in this country to establish and maintain social control—should be taught explicitly to minority students (Delpit, 1995), since it is not acquired automatically. Guidance and modeling can go a long way toward promoting awareness of and facility with this discourse. For example, preferred and accepted ways of talking, writing, and presenting are culture specific. In an exploratory study of the written discourse of several languages, Kaplan (1988) discovered that the way Americans structure their discourse follows a linear, deductive progression in which each paragraph is structured in the "this is what I am going to say—I am saying it now—this is what I said" format. Although British written discourse is also structured linearly, it is inductive, thus giving rise to some British criticism that American writing is boring. Latin writers, on the other hand, and Spanish writers in particular can proceed through many zigzags in which the topic shifts into parallel explorations and then goes back to the main idea. Unless Spanish-speaking writers are explicitly shown these differences in writing styles, they may apply the structures preferred in their native language to English, thus producing writing that appears chaotic to North American teachers and students. However, explicit teaching of the rules of the discourse of schooling is only a first step in the scaffolding of students' performance. In a second stage, students need to become ethnographers, collaboratively studying the reality of this culture and discerning its rules so that they become proficient participants in it.

Subject-matter teachers also need to alert students to the multiple ways experts in the discipline use language for different purposes. The work of Halliday (1994) and his colleagues in Australia (Martin, 1990; Mercer, 2000) using systemic linguistics and a focus on genre has been very productive. Derewianka (1990) suggests a curriculum cycle in which students are introduced to a genre, a text illustrating that genre is read, the purposes and schematic structure of the genre are modeled, then teacher and students together engage in joint construction of a text in the chosen genre, and, finally, students are invited to independently construct a text preparing multiple drafts and working through peer and teacher reviews. Eventually students can undertake the writing of the genre quite independently. Gibbons (2002) adapts that technique to second-language-learner education.

Student awareness of differences, modeling by teachers of preferred situated behaviors, and study by students themselves of differences and preferred behaviors are three steps in the development of learner proficiency and autonomy that need to be included in the education of language-minority students to make them effective in their multiple worlds.

(7) Use tasks that are relevant, meaningful, engaging, and varied.

If you want me to be honest, the biggest problem here is that we're bored. We spend too much time sitting in classes that are dead, unexciting. Teachers talk to the blackboard, and always lecture, lecture, lecture. It's the same day after day, every day, every period, except when they get mad because somebody complains or does something to wake

us up. It's boring. You can't just sit through that. And sometimes it really is too much, and that's when you think, Why should I get up to go to school? What am I getting out of it?

9th-grade student from Mexico, three years in the United States

I was very happy when at the beginning of the year the teacher told us we were going to read novels. She brought us copies of *The Pearl*. I thought, Great! The characters even seem to be Mexican…but she had us read a word at a time, and if we didn't know it, we had to look it up in the dictionary, write a couple of sentences using it. It was February, and we still had not finished the book. I hated the book, I did not understand it, and who cared about it after such a long time anyway?

10th-grade student from Mexico, two and a half years in American schools

Most classes for immigrant students are monotonous, teacher fronted, and directed to the whole class; teacher monologues are the rule (Ramírez & Merino, 1990). If students do not interact with each other, they do not have the opportunity to construct their own understandings, so naturally they often become disengaged. Because immigrant students are usually well behaved in class, teachers are not always aware that they are bored and are not learning. Good classes for immigrant students not only provide them with access to important ideas and skills but also engage them in their own constructive development of understandings.

It should be mandatory for every teacher of immigrant students to shadow a student for a day at school and to get first-hand knowledge of their usually passive schooling experience. Most teachers, having experienced school from the students' perspective, would most likely want to transform their teaching.

(8) Maximize learners' opportunities to interact while making sense of language and content through the use of complex and flexible forms of collaboration.

I learned so much from the world religions project. At first, I thought it would not be so interesting because I am not especially religious. But as we started our research, and then exchanged information and viewpoints, I could see there were so many similarities among such different religions. It is the same way we feel here: We come from many nations and many languages, we all look different on the surface, but underneath we are very similar and share a lot. That is why we like to collaborate. It helps us see all those important things.

High school student from Russia, three years in the United States

I always think that it is better for me to work in small groups because then I am not afraid to participate. I am basically a very shy person, and if I have to speak in front of everybody, I rather die. In small groups nobody is afraid, not even to make a mistake.

Middle school student from Cambodia, four years in the United States

Collaboration is essential for second-language learners because to develop language, they need opportunities to use it in meaningful, purposeful, and enticing interactions (Kagan & McGroarty, 1993). In the best classes I have observed, rather than having individual students present to the whole class, teachers use the jigsaw configuration: They regroup the students who have worked collaboratively on various projects into new formations

to present to other small groups what they have learned. In this way, all students' oral presentations convey new information to a small group. The group may later use this information for other activities such as discussing a problem and solving it jointly and then may write about it individually.

Collaborative work needs to provide every student with substantial and equitable opportunities to participate in open exchange and elaborated discussions. It must move beyond simplistic conceptions that assign superficial roles to second-language learners, such as being the go-getter or the time-keeper for the group (Adger, Kalyanpur, Peterson, & Bridger, 1995). In these collaborative groups, the teacher is no longer the authority figure; rather, students work autonomously, taking responsibility for their own learning.

The teacher provides a task that invites and requires each student's participation and then hands over to the students the responsibility for solving the problem. Though teachers supply the tasks, they do not provide learners with specific questions to be answered but instead encourage them to take a personal perspective on the topics that arise in small-group discussion.

Collaborative tasks do not involve learners in routine procedures but instead present them with problems that have complex solutions with no single right answer or standard set of steps (Cohen, 1994). These tasks should move toward maximal student involvement, in which students choose the theme they will investigate and the focus and strategies for their investigation.

Diverse types of jigsaws are ideal for English learners because they provide them with multiple opportunities to discuss content with different classmates, first as they become experts at one short story and then as they share their expertise with others who read different stories to later engage in discussion of common elements running through the pieces as well as in the appreciation of differences. For example, in a language arts class the theme being studied is the short story, and for the next three periods the teacher will focus on short stories dealing with betrayal. Four excellent stories are chosen, and the questions given beforehand to all students are the same, highlighting key elements common to the four stories. Later on students may compare how the stories differ from each other. In classes where I saw well-constructed interaction, students were challenged, supported, and thoroughly engaged. They participated in quality interactions, where the sustained dialogue built on the participants' ideas, which in turn promoted improved understanding of concepts. As is testament to the level of engagement, students never skipped these classes and always arrived on time. These students learned a great deal about the short story as a genre and about human experience, and they also developed their academic uses of English and strengthened their humanity.

The following quote from a freshman from Colombia who at the time of the interview had been in the United States for two years illustrates how this productive collaboration can also take place in highly heterogeneous academic environments and can create a culture of learning and support at the school.

> I remember a case of a Mexican student who when he came to school he could not speak any English, and he couldn't read or write in his own language. He was at first very afraid people would laugh at him, but with Mr. DeFazio's help and our help, he is progressing very well…because in this school everybody cares about everybody. I know at one point this boy felt like he wanted to die, but here, because we all work with him, he is doing great.

(9) Give students multiple opportunities to extend their understandings and to apply their knowledge.

> I loved the time capsule project. At the beginning of the year Miss Heisler asked us to take a shoebox to school and to put in it cards talking about the important things in our life at the time, our dreams, our fears, our strengths, our weaknesses. We then decorated our boxes, and she said they were going to be buried until the end of the year. So, we all went together to put them away in a room nobody uses. Then, on the last day of school, we went and opened them. It was so interesting to compare how much we had changed in just one school year. … There were things I said then that I do not believe in anymore…that was a great way of showing us how much we grow and learn English.

9th-grade student from Guatemala, two years in the United States

> The United Nations simulation? I loved it! After we read so many different perspectives on the Palestinian situation we can see many different sides, and in the UN discussion we can discuss and try to win new understandings. It is difficult to imagine an easy solution to the problem.

10th-grade student from Romania

One of the goals of learning is to be able to apply acquired knowledge to novel situations. For English learners, these applications reinforce the development of new language, concepts, and academic skills as students actively draw connections between pieces of knowledge and their contexts. Understanding a topic of study involves being able to perform in a variety of cognitively demanding ways (Perkins, 1993).

In one of the schools I visited, the teacher of an ESL class gave students opportunities to engage in substantive interactions where the dialogue built on the participants' ideas to build understanding of concepts. After the class had read a myth using a variety of interactive tasks, the teacher divided the myth into three sections. Groups of students were assigned to write the dialogues they thought might have occurred during a particular moment of the myth. Although these dialogues were developed collaboratively within each group, each student kept his or her own script and used it for the final performance of a drama on that section. Students analyzed, compared, made connections, hypothesized, monitored their understandings, assisted each other, and finally transferred the knowledge they acquired to a new situation, re-presenting a narrative text as a dramatic one.

This teacher's approach did not primarily depend on transmitting knowledge but rather depended on scaffolding her instruction so that her students could perform in complex ways. Learning to explore cause and effect, examining the main components of a myth, and looking for evidence to support an interpretation were all developed and refined over time. The teacher's main purpose was to develop her students' ability to use English in a variety of school contexts beyond her class, which she did by structuring her lessons so that substantive concepts and the language needed to express them could be developed.

The student in the first quote at the beginning of this section has had the opportunity to compare how much a year has meant in terms of personal, academic, and linguistic development. Providing students with similar opportunities to build self-awareness and with the knowledge that progress has occurred in their lives is an effective way of preparing them for life after school.

(10) View authentic assessment as an integral part of teaching and learning.

> As I opened my time capsule I remembered that a friend had to translate for me what we had to do. I could not write very much in English, so I completed my cards in Spanish. At the end of the year, everything I wrote in Spanish I can write in English. And what made me happy was to see that my dreams for the year had come true. I can now speak, read, and write in English more or less; of course, I still have a lot to learn, but I also have two more years in the school to do that.

10th-grade student from Mexico, one and a half years in the United States

> Boy, was I nervous the day before the presentation of my senior project. I wished I was in ESL II so I could do it in Spanish, but then, talking to my friends who were doing their presentation in Spanish, they were just as nervous as me. So we decided to rehearse together one more time. I felt good because the rehearsal made me realize that I understood the topic of my research better than anybody else and that I could probably answer the questions from the jury. How did it go? Fine, I was nervous at first, but when I started presenting and I looked at my panel and they were smiling, I forgot about my nerves and continued. The whole thing went by fast and well.

12th-grade student from Mexico, three years in the United States

Assessment should be done not only by teachers but also by learners, who assess themselves and each other. Considerable research supports the importance of self-monitoring in the learning of second languages (O'Malley & Chamot, 1989; Oxford, 1990; Rubin & Thompson, 1982). Authentic assessment activities engage second-language learners in self-directed learning, in the construction of knowledge through disciplined inquiry, and in the analysis of the problems they encounter.

For example, correction of pronunciation errors is especially effective when students are put in charge of monitoring their own oral production in English. This can be done by recording, within each collaborative team of students, the individual presentations at the final stage of a jigsaw project. The cassette recordings can then be given to students so that they can listen to their own presentation and can write comments reflecting on it—analyzing their production, pinpointing troublesome areas, and exploring corrective strategies.

Likewise, portfolios of student work can powerfully indicate to students their progress in the acquisition of English and academic dexterity, as the first student quote in this section indicates. This is especially important during the intermediate stages of language development, when students tend to feel that they are not progressing very much. Other experiential assessment practices—such as self-evaluation narratives, the use of rubrics, and the senior project—also hold promise for the education of high school immigrant students.

Teacher assessment of English learners' writing needs to be especially considered. Teachers tend to focus on the most superficial aspects of a student's text (e.g., spelling and verb forms) and miss the important details that should be considered first: Did students address the assignment? Did they present relevant ideas? Were their ideas organized in coherent ways? (Walqui-van Lier & Hernández, 2001). It is linguistic knowledge that tends to be assessed and not the conceptual and general value of learning a second language (Rea-Dickins & Rixon, 1997). An excellent example of this is found in the book *The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down*, when author Anne Fadiman (1997) presents the tragic misconstructions of interactions between Hmong communities and health workers in the California Central

Valley. Her ethnography includes a glimpse of the evaluation of a student writing gone terribly wrong in the classroom. The teacher had asked her students at Merced's Hoover Junior High to write an incident for an autobiography. May, a Hmong student, wrote,

> On our way to Thailand was something my parent will never forget. It was one of the scariest time of my life, and maybe my parents. We had to walked by feet. Some of family, however, leave their kids behind, kill, or beat them. For example, one of the relative has tried to kill one of his kid, but luckily he didn't died. And manage to come along with the group. Today, he's in America carrying a scar on his forehead.
>
> My parents had to carried me and two of my younger sisters, True and Yer. My mom could only carried me, and my dad could only my sister. True with many other things which they have to carry such as, rices (food), clothing, and blankets for overnight. My parents pay one of the relative to carry Yer. One of my sister who died in Thailand was so tire of walking saying that she can't go on any longer. But she dragged along and made it to Thailand.
>
> There was gun shot going on and soldier were close to every where. If there was a gun shot, we were to look for a place to hide. On our trip to Thailand, there were many gun shots and instead of looking for a place to hide, my parents would dragged our hands or put us on their back and run for their lifes. When it gets too heavy, my parents would tossed some of their stuff away. Some of the things they had throw away are valuable to them, but our lives were more important to them than the stuffs (pp. 154, 155).

"You have had an exciting life!" wrote her teacher at the end of the essay. "Please watch verbs in the past tense. (p. 155)"

Authentic assessment is embedded in everyday practice: How is a given student performing? At what stage is she in the development of her ability to express a sequence of events? Is she ready to take the lead in a reciprocal teaching activity? All of these questions, which teachers ask themselves every minute of their teaching, are assessment activities, and they inform and determine teaching arrangements. It is commonly assumed that classroom assessment is low stakes. Rae-Dickins and Rixon (1997) warn us, though, that in fact it is not necessarily low stakes, because it is often the case that high-stakes decisions are predicated on learners' in-class performance. What did the teacher in Fadiman's (1997) example think of May? She treated her simply as a language producer that needed to be corrected, not a person with valuable ideas and terrible experiences from which she, and everybody else in the classroom, could grow intellectually and academically. All good assessment, then, provides learners with opportunities to learn and helps teachers know their students, value them, and determine what and how to teach them next.

The Development of Teacher Expertise: A Model

How can all teachers be supported to deliberately plan and implement lessons based on these 10 priorities? To help conceptualize how teachers might develop their expertise, this section discusses what it is that accomplished teachers of ELLs know and are able to do. I use a model of teacher understanding and expertise that I hope will make possible rich and focused conversations about the complexities of teaching linguistically diverse students. As will become clear in the discussion, the knowledge and skills required are not just of a
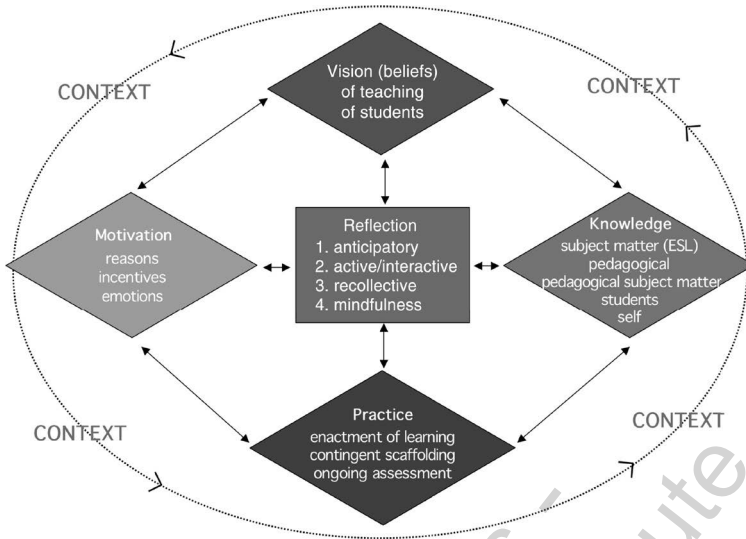
Figure 6.1 The development of teacher understanding

technical nature but include, just as importantly, personal, social, and political aspects of a teacher's professional life and context.

The model (Figure 6.1) depicts two main aspects of teacher understanding and its development:

1. A mapping of the domains that constitute the knowledge, dispositions, emotions, and abilities of accomplished teachers working in specific contexts (the upper part of the diagram)
2. The notion that teacher understanding and expertise are accomplished over an extended, ongoing time continuum, with certain aspects becoming more salient than others at different times (the timeline at the bottom)

Throughout their studies and professional lives, teachers develop in six domains: vision, motivation, knowledge, reflection, practice, and context. But this development does not just occur at the individual level; it is a result of complex interactions with colleagues and with institutions. Beginning with preservice education, the systems in which future teachers study and later practice support this growth or constrain it. It is important, however, to raise a note of caution about the organizing model presented here. By necessity, a diagram such as this one is unidimensional and idealized and as such fails to represent the considerable conceptual and practical overlap between its components. The domains represented are not discrete or neatly separable into categories, nor do they all develop in organized, sequential ways. They constitute an organic model and coexist in mutually supporting relations; thus, they cannot be thought of as existing independently or related to one another in a linear fashion. Nevertheless, it is important to discuss them in abstraction because in this way the organizer can be used to characterize teachers' locations in the process of learning to become accomplished teachers and thus help them plan their development. More importantly, the process can help conceptualize the work of teacher professional growth in a more focused and organic way.

Unpacking the Model

Vision   This construct encompasses teachers' ideologies, objectives, and dreams, all of which provide a sense of direction to their students' learning. Accomplished teachers believe in the educability of each and every English learner and seek to ensure equal learning opportunities for all. They also realize that teaching is not a neutral act and that through their teaching they may contribute to maintaining the status quo for their students and their families, or they may help them build a more equitable societal order in the future (Fairclough, 1992). Pennycook (1994), for example, points out that ESL teachers need to become aware of what vision of society they are working toward to develop professionally. Vision includes a clear ultimate goal of (1) optimal instruction; and (2) a vision of students as capable individuals.

Optimal Instruction   What are the images teachers have of what is possible in teaching second-language learners? Can they conceive of accelerated, rigorous teaching for all students that takes into consideration the differential starting points and multiple abilities represented in any given class? As Valdés (2001, p. 147) observes, in many English language development classes "Little went on in the classroom that could prepare [students] to develop the kinds of proficiencies they would need to succeed in other classes." Her comments are corroborated by the work of August and Hakuta (1997), Lucas (1997), and Walqui (2000).

Teacher preparation programs and opportunities for ongoing professional growth need to build visions that run counter to these realities, visions that set the goal high and achieve it. They then need to deconstruct the processes that led to these teachers' success so that others have multiple examples of what is possible with English learners and can initially emulate some of these practices to eventually appropriate them by recreating and constructing their own.

Vision of Students as Capable Individuals   This may be thought of as short-term vision, focused on developing specific students' potential as learners within the time frame that a teacher works with them (e.g., a semester, an academic year), and long-term vision, which conceptualizes them as future capable actors in the societies of which they form a part. As one conscientious teacher of ELLs said to me (Walqui, 1997, p. 246), exasperated by the video of a colleague whose practices demonstrated that she had an extremely limited vision of her students' capabilities,

> I would suggest that she go somewhere outside the school, where these students are in a social function, or a cultural event, where she is not teaching them anything, so that she can appreciate them, not only as competent, but so that she could see them a little bit more like people. … There is a certain level that you have to respect the students that you are teaching, that you have to see them as viable contributing individuals, that they have a history behind them. … They need to feel that there is something more to them than just this peephole that is coming through their class… .

A decade and a half ago, Goodlad's (1990) national study of teacher education found that a rich vision of what minority students could achieve was lacking in preservice education. In his words, "…The idea of moral imperatives for teachers was virtually foreign in concept and strange in language for most of the future teachers we interviewed. Many were less than convinced that all students can learn; they voiced the view that they should be

kind and considerate to all, but they accepted as fact the theory that some simply cannot learn" (p. 264). Fifteen years later, with few exceptions, the situation has worsened in pre-service programs.

Among practicing teachers the situation is equally bad. The MetLife Survey of the American Teacher 2001 (p. 10) concludes that "teachers and principals in schools with more than two-thirds minority students [i.e., with a very high presence of English learners] are less likely than those in schools with one third or fewer minority students to report that all or most of their students will achieve their full academic potential for this year (59% vs. 76%)."

Knowledge   This category represents the range of cognitive understandings that inform instruction: (1) general pedagogical knowledge; (2) subject-matter knowledge to include knowledge of how to teach English as a second language and how to embed that knowledge in the teaching of academic content; (3) pedagogical content knowledge; (4) knowledge of students; and (5) teacher self-knowledge.

General pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1987) comprises the general corpus of knowledge and skills concerning learning, learners, and the goals and processes of education. Knowledge about how children and teenagers learn, general principles of instruction (such as the importance of setting up collaborative activities that promote substantive interaction in class and the role of wait time), the development of metacognitive skills, and issues on curriculum development belong in this area.

Subject-matter knowledge comprises the teacher's knowledge of what Schwab (1964) calls the substantive and the syntactic structures of the subject area. The substantive structures include main concepts in the field and the paradigms that give structure to the subject and that guide future developments in the area. The syntactic structures of a field include the canons of evidence and proof that are shared by subject-matter communities. In the education of English language learners, for example, subject-matter knowledge includes not only knowledge about the subject being taught (e.g., science) but also knowledge of educational linguistics, sociolinguistics, teaching English as a second language—ESL or English language development—and knowledge of and about other languages if education is to be carried out bilingually. Thirty years after the communicative revolution in language teaching emerged, little has changed in classrooms geared to teach English as a second language or academic content through the medium of English. This failure to address in rigorous ways the conceptual, linguistic, and academic needs of English learners in schools has led Valdés (2001, p. 145) to call classes specifically intended for ELLs "the ESL ghetto." This ghetto is characterized by classes that present atomistic bits and pieces of "artificial-sounding language…or …the somewhat distorted language of subject-matter teachers to use 'simplified' English in order to give students access to the curriculum" (p. 13).

Deep subject-matter knowledge is essential for content-area teachers of ELLs since only a robust understanding of the discipline can help them select central concepts and relationships in the discipline to develop with their students while attending to the explicit teaching of the academic discourse needed.

Pedagogical content knowledge is the knowledge teachers possess about how to teach a specific subject, and themes within that subject, to specific groups of students. It includes access to multiple forms of representations for concepts—the availability of appropriate examples, metaphors, similes, ways of structuring the teaching of a specific concept and its interconnections to make it accessible and to promote the development of deep understandings in students. It also includes knowledge of content and performance standards

that must be met, as well as ways of assessing their achievement across individual students. This weaving of new concepts together with ways of presenting them to specific students makes teaching an extremely complex endeavor.

Knowledge of students—their strengths, what they bring to the classroom, and who they are outside of school—is essential for teachers. For example, sometimes teachers correlate the linguistic limitations of second-language learners or the features displayed by second-dialect speakers with academic limitations, and that incorrect correlation leads them to water down their curriculum and to expect little of students. As the students' voices in this chapter show, the fact that they do not know English does not mean they do not know about life, that they have not developed important knowledge that may be tapped into to build complex academic skills.

Knowledge of students has to be based on a cultivated ability to observe and learn about the cultures represented in class. It is generative rather than fixed or stereotypical. For this reason it is important for preservice and in-service teachers to conduct mini-ethnographies of students and their communities in order to learn firsthand who they are, how they are evolving, and what their strengths, struggles, and aspirations are.

Knowledge of self is what teachers develop as they evolve professionally. Being able to see themselves not only in their accomplishments but also in their failures and contradictions enables teachers to grow and improve. Lack of self-knowledge among educators can impede their ability to create optimal learning experiences for immigrant students. It can also help perpetuate the hidden curriculum of schools, which transmits meanings such as: (a) what it means to *be good,* (b) what matters, (c) the value or hierarchy and authority, and (d) the demeaning of learning (Fairclough, 1992).

Practice   This area represents the teachers' skills and strategies for enacting their goals and understandings in practice. Understanding alone is not enough but needs to be combined with the ability to act on it in effective ways. At times we meet teachers who can articulate a coherent grasp of what ought to be happening in a class but who demonstrate a discrepancy between their knowledge and the ability to implement it. It is in the translation of under-standing into practice that failure is particularly common. To reduce such failures, support during implementation is needed. Such support should include an extended, coherent, and well-supported period of teacher induction and ongoing learning, where coaching, videotaping, and the deconstruction of practice via iterative sequences of video discussion, planning, and critical implementation can take place.

Motivation   This category is composed of the reasons, incentives, and emotions that give energy and meaning to a teacher's visions, understandings, and practices. It is commonplace in education to say that people who join the teaching profession do so motivated by a desire to change the world. To ensure that this motivation is strengthened in practice, teacher-preparation programs need to prepare their students to work on changing the world within school structures that are sometimes toxic. An example is the time-honored practice of giving the most experienced teachers in a high school their favorite assignments (typically advanced placement classes with fewer students who are better prepared academically) and assigning new teachers (sometimes emergency credentialed, with little or no preparation to teach) the most complex assignments, those that require the most expertise. If experienced teachers helped their new colleagues apprentice into the job, choosing the most challeng-ing assignments, modeling expertise, coaching them, and offering them advice and their

pedagogical and emotional support, then most teachers' motivation, knowledge, and vision would be reinforced, which would in turn benefit teaching and learning.

The current climate of high-stakes accountability adds to the complexity of factors that undermine motivation. In California, for example, the Academic Performance Index (API) system has added even more pressures to the teaching force, leading them to such negative practices as teaching to the test, encouraging student absence during official testing time, and, in some dramatic cases, even allowing cheating. As seen, without supportive structures in place at the school, motivation is eroded, and good teaching for English learners is not possible.

Reflection   Reflection in teaching occurs when knowledgeable practitioners try to make sense of their actions in classrooms by engaging in, among other activities, evaluating, planning, remembering, and contemplating, all of which contribute to the understanding of their work in schools. The model of teacher understanding draws on van Manen's (1991) view of four types of reflection in teaching: (1) anticipatory (i.e., planning); (2) active–interactive (i.e., thinking on their feet, as teachers teach and deliberate among alternative actions); (3) recollective (i.e., revisiting past events to learn from them for future applications); and (4) mindfulness (e.g., pedagogical wisdom, the result of having appropriated the right ways of acting in teaching after an extended history of engagement in reflection).

Teachers, and in particular teachers of ELLs, seldom have the opportunity to engage in reflective practice. Professional development geared to develop their expertise needs to offer venues that engage them in collaborative reflection on their practice. For example, teachers need the time to plan lessons together, to reconsider past assignments, and to reformulate or refine them for future applications. Professional-development sessions could help them articulate and make explicit the considerations they engaged in as they taught a class and also could provide them with opportunities to collaboratively examine student work against standards to plan future pedagogical actions. In current work being conducted by WestEd with teachers of second-language adolescents (Walqui & Koelsch, 2006), teachers are videotaped, and the videos are used to invite commentaries and reflections, with highly successful results. These are the kinds of reflective activities that enhance teacher expertise in working with their students.

Context

Do teachers work in collegial environments that enable them to examine with others classroom situations, students' progress, and their own teaching with others? Do they work in schools where teachers close their doors and where little is shared about what really happens in the classroom? Are most conversations in the school opportunities to advance teachers' expertise? Is a collegial context constructed in which teachers can share their ideas and concerns with ease and where they assist each other in the development of understandings about how to work with ELLs? Visions of compelling teaching and optimal visions of students evolve in a particular context, and can either be strengthened or debilitated by that context. In similar fashion, knowledge—in its many forms here discussed—the ability to reflect, to become motivated or demotivated, and to enhance practice are transformed by the environments in which teachers operate. Context embeds dimensions that move from classroom to the school, district, community, state, and federal demands and responsibilities, and it includes the interactions that take place among all these dimensions.

As argued in this chapter, all domains of teacher understanding overlap and reinforce or impede the development of teacher expertise. For example, professional development offerings typically shy away from discussion of the competing visions that different individuals and agencies have for the education of English learners and what needs to be done about it. There is a strong tendency to understand teachers' professional growth as a technical issue, one that is not political in nature (Hargreaves, 1994). However, both in preservice and in-service education, promoting the careful consideration of ethical and political components of teaching is worthwhile. Being always situated in the particular, good professional development—as good teaching—needs to respond to the specific circumstances of teachers' and students' lives. The model presented here is a tool that I hope will enable readers to establish rich conversations about the nature of teacher expertise in the service of linguistically diverse students.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this chapter comes from Walqui (2000). Adapted with permission.
2. A Mellon grant given to the Center for Applied Linguistics made it possible for me to study exemplary instructional approaches for ELLs in secondary schools. I visited nominated middle and high schools to study how teachers orchestrated their teaching in these settings and to interview students, teachers, and administrators. A grant given by the Spencer Foundation in 1997 enabled me to study and propose a model for the development and implementation of teacher knowledge. Finally, a Regional Educational Laboratory grant (2001–05) afforded the opportunity to go back to the schools, to videotape accomplished teachers in action, to study their craft, and to design teacher professional development materials.

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