Bridging Foundational Skills Between Languages

Annotating Scope and Sequence and Providing Responsive Instruction

Purpose of the document

This document is intended to support educators in

- **annotating their foundational skills scope and sequence** to support bridging* the sounds and sound patterns multilingual learners (MLs) have in their primary language(s) to those in English; and,
- **preparing lessons** to leverage students' skills and be responsive to their needs.

*"The bridge is the instructional moment when the teacher brings the students' languages together to guide students in transferring knowledge and comparing and contrasting their languages."[1]

Please note that educators do not need to know students' primary languages to use this process. This resource is not intended to be prescriptive or comprehensive. Though many of the foundational skills might be influenced by a student's primary language, other factors can cause divergent articulations for sounds in the new language (e.g. speech development, attention).

The processes outlined below are ideally collaborative (e.g., done during a PLC; within teams of teachers, specialists, interventionists, and coaches). Using a shared electronic form, teachers and specialists can divide up the work outlined in the steps for annotating the foundational skills scope and sequence. Once they complete the first part of the process, they can regroup to discuss what they determined about the foundational skills students may or may not have in their languages and the implications for instruction, sharing ideas for preparing responsive lessons.

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[1] Cheryl Urow, "The Bridge: Making Cross-Linguistic Connections," *Teaching for Biliteracy, Inc.*, accessed October 1, 2022, **https://www.teachingforbiliteracy.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/The-Bridge-Making-Cross-Linguistic-Connections-p.-1-6.pdf**, 5.

For leaders considering implementing this tool, see this companion resource: **Leader Checklist for Implementing Teacher-Facing Multilingual Learner Resources**.

Suggested process for annotating scope and sequence

Annotating a scope and sequence is ideally completed either toward the beginning of the school year or before each unit to identify respective target sounds and sound patterns.

Step 1: Identify and record the language(s) your MLs speak.

Languages students speak can be determined by:
- asking students and/or their families;
- reviewing the students' home language surveys (HLS) completed at the time of student registration, which should be kept in student records; or
- connecting with the school's language development specialist, if applicable.

Note: Sometimes students speak a dialect or variety of a major language group (e.g., Spanish) and may automatically provide the name of the major language group or the closest one. However, they may not be proficient in the most widely spoken version of that language. This will be evident when you start making connections and those connections are not familiar to the student. Teachers may be able to do a quick internet search for other dialects/varieties of the named major language group—or even **language family**—to see if they can find anything familiar to the student. For example, students may indicate that they use Farsi, but the teacher may also be able to use resources in Pashto—which is connected to Farsi—to reach students. In some cases, especially in the case of indigenous languages, there may not be similar enough languages or resources to use for reference.

Create a chart that includes a column for each language in addition to English that is represented in the classroom. The first column should provide space to list the sound or sound pattern from the curriculum's scope and sequence; this will be completed as part of step 4.

Example chart:

Sound/Sound pattern	Spanish	Burmese	Swahili

- If there are speakers of only one language group other than English in a classroom, the teacher need not create a separate table. They can annotate their copy of the scope and sequence directly according to steps 2 and 3.
- If there are speakers of than one additional language in a classroom (e.g., Spanish, Burmese, and Swahili), the teacher can create a matrix chart to list the sound and sound pattern sequence on one axis and the languages of the MLs in the room on the other.

Step 2: Find language comparison resources to support the bridging process.

Look for resource(s) for a specific language to identify overlaps and/or differences between the sounds of that language and English.

Examples:
- **Language Transfers: The Interactions between English and Students' Primary Languages**
- **MyLanguages.org**: After clicking on a specific language (e.g., Spanish), select the "Alphabet" tab and you will see the letters, English sounds, and pronunciation examples.
- **Phonemic Inventories and Cultural and Linguistic Information Across Languages**
- **Languages** (technical guides with references to the International Phonetic Alphabet [IPA])
- Swan, Michael and Smith, Bernard. *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems*. 2nd Edition. Cambridge University Press, 2001. (**Note**: Many terms used in this book—including the title—are outdated and may represent deficit-based language. Instruction Partners believes strongly in the importance of asset-based language and does not use or endorse the use of these terms. However, the resource contains valuable information about comparing languages. An internet search will yield different options for accessing this resource.)

Notes:
- Though not all of the languages students speak and understand may be represented in these resources, they may still be able to understand connections to a language in the same language family. See the note in step 1**.**
- Though these resources can be very helpful, they may not accurately represent all MLs (even within a single language as dialects and variants may have different conventions), and you may find contradictions between resources. The ultimate resource is listening

to the student's speech to determine which sounds and sound patterns are present or may not be present. Teachers may also be able to find a speaker of the same primary language as a student in the community who can share more about the language.

- Some countries may have multiple official languages. If a student's primary language is not listed in a resource, teachers may be able to do an internet search for other official languages of that country. For example, Kinyarwanda is a language spoken in Rwanda that may not be included in any of the resources listed above. However, a quick internet search indicates that other official languages of Rwanda are English, French, and Kiswahili. If the student indicates they do not understand the English phonemes yet and a teacher is unable to find adequate resources for their primary language, the teacher could try to reference one of Rwanda's other languages to see if the student understands.

Step 3: Determine and record an annotation key for your foundational skills curriculum scope and sequence.

In order to quickly note and see which sounds and sound patterns students may or may not have based on their primary language, it is helpful to create a key (e.g., color coding).

Note: This annotation process works best when teachers focus on the typical speech sounds and sound patterns of the students' languages as a predictive measure for understanding possible student performance. Teachers can record student performance on their progress monitoring tools or adjust the chart to also provide space for progress monitoring (see step 5).

Examples:

Code type	Target sound or sound pattern exists	Sound or sound pattern is close to the articulation of target	Target sound or sound pattern does not exist in student's language	No information could be found
Color	green	yellow	red	transparent/blank
Shape/Symbol	√	≈	⊗	?
Words/Letters	Yes (Y)	Close (C)	No (N)	TBD

Note: Teachers can add a row for noting if a grapheme exists in the students' languages and/or if there are any other relevant details to consider about the language related to foundational skills and/or print awareness (e.g., language is read from right to left).

Step 4: Inventory phonics connections and contrasts between languages.

Populate the "Sound/Sound pattern" column in the chart below based on the school's curricular scope and sequence.

Example:

Sound/Sound pattern	Spanish	Burmese	Swahili
a			
t			
h			

Then, select one sound or sound pattern to start comparing and complete the matrix with the code type you choose from step 3.

Example: /r/. Determine if this sound is present in the students' languages using resources such as those listed in step 2. Annotate accordingly. If you also find information regarding the English phoneme that is close or approximate, note that as well. See the table below:

Sound/Sound pattern	Spanish	Burmese	Swahili
/r/	≈ /d/	⊗	√

Note: There are instances where a sound or sound pattern may be used by some speakers in one geographical region of a country but not in another. Though this annotating process and the referenced resources can help identify major trends, there may be some variations. Classroom assessments and progress monitoring will help to confirm the information within the chart.

Step 5: Consider adjustments for progress monitoring.

To use this tool as a resource for progress monitoring, consider options for updating the chart. Options include adding a column next to each language to record the initials of students who still need support with that sound or sound pattern and adding a column in front of the skill column to list the initials of students once they show mastery of the skill.

Suggested process for preparing lessons to be responsive to MLs' skills and needs

Step 1: Use your annotations to consider which sounds and sound patterns only require a quick connection and which ones will take significantly more explicit modeling, practice, and feedback.

Teachers can consider how they might adjust the suggested process and steps below to fit in a regular cycle of lesson planning amid unit internalization. For example, key move 2 in Foundational Skills Lesson Preparation includes a list of planning actions related to inventorying potential scaffolds so that students can access grade-level instruction. The examples below could be used as one of those scaffolds.

When teachers identify if a sound or sound pattern exists in the students' languages, they can note on their plans how they want to make a quick connection between the languages. On the other hand, when a sound or sound pattern may not or does not exist in the students' skill set, the teacher can anticipate the need for additional time and targeted instruction and practice as well as considerations in making assessment and progress monitoring decisions that honor students' language influence.

Note: Though referring to a student's primary language supports inclusivity, some students may have more precise sound articulation in English after explicit and systematic instruction that they have not yet received in their primary languages, just like monolingual English speakers who need explicit articulation support to move toward precision.

Step 2: Indicate how you will address the MLs' needs in the lesson.

Teachers can use the ideas in the chart below to respond to students' strengths and needs in their foundational skills development. Once teachers determine if a sound or sound pattern exists in the students' languages, they can review the sample actions in the table to determine next steps. This chart is not comprehensive, but it provides examples that might generate additional ideas.

Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO exist in student's primary language as the same or approximate sound articulation	Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO NOT exist in student's primary language
• **Be explicit.** Explicitly name for students that languages share sounds and show students how they can use their language to help them learn an additional language even more quickly through examples (i.e., the bridge). ○ For example, share that students will be learning more about the sound /s/. Say words with the sounds in the language(s) of the students (e.g., some words that have the sound /s/ are: "super," "sopa" [Spanish for "soup"], and "saba" [Arabic for "seven"]). Re-emphasize the /s/ sound in each word and note the connections again explicitly for the students. Continue by saying something like, "Sometimes when we say this sound in English words, we may say it a bit differently than in the languages some of our classmates speak. Isn't it pretty cool how we all communicate in our own special ways? We will keep practicing the sound so we can all say, read, and write it in English together!" This could work in small-group instruction, using only the examples for the languages represented in each small group. • **Use visual supports.** Search for resources that include pictures to represent words with that sound in the student's language (e.g., "boca" ["mouth"] for the /b/ sound). For instance: ○ Alphabet books and/or cards may be available as part of a curriculum or program's set of materials.	• **Consider other skills that might support the development of the new skill.** Explicitly name for students, even if their new language has new sounds and sound patterns, that they can use the sounds and sound patterns they do know to make it easier to learn new ones. For example, even if a student's language does not use the /v/ sound, there may be sounds with similar mouth, tongue, and/or teeth positioning to reference. • **Model and provide practice opportunities.** Explicitly model the precise, accurate pronunciation and articulation of sounds or sound patterns and reinforce the accurate practice. For example, show mouth and tongue position (giving students a mirror to practice the new sound while watching their mouth position). ○ Give productive feedback on progress toward mastery of that sound/skill to reinforce the appropriate mouth, tongue, and teeth placement.

Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO exist in student's primary language as the same or approximate sound articulation	Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO NOT exist in student's primary language
○ **MyLanguages.org** has tabs for word lists for common topics, along with images and written words, in both the selected language and English. For pronunciation support: ○ Ask the student to say the name of what is pictured in their language. Then, repeat and emphasize that sound. ○ For help with the pronunciation of the word in the student's language, enter the name of the item in the picture (e.g., "boca" pictured for /b/) into an application or website that translates and pronounces those words (e.g., **Spanishdict.com**). ● **Ask students to share.** Ask the student to share additional examples of words with the target sounds or sound patterns from their own language. ● **Consider language influence.** If there is a consistent difference in the articulation of a specific sound or sound pattern, it may be primary language influence (e.g., Spanish speakers adding a schwa before /s/ when the /s/ comes before a consonant). Consider: ○ affirming the student's skill connected to their primary language(s) and framing the lesson(s) in English as "adding new skills." ○ consulting a language comparison resource like *Learner English: A Teacher's Guide to Interference and Other Problems** that lists potential language influence scenarios that may need additional targeted instruction and practice in order to add the new articulation in English to their skill set. In this case, explain to students what they learned about their languages (e.g., the schwa in Spanish), and affirm that is the correct pronunciation in their	○ Supplement teacher-based explicit modeling and instruction with digital applications for student and family practice at home. For example, try the **soundsofspeech app**. There are multiple speech sound practice options available online as well. It may help to consult with a speech language pathologist for recommendations. ○ Provide additional guided practice with minimal pairs—two words that vary by only a single sound (e.g., ship and sheep)—to help students differentiate the new sounds or sound patterns from ones they have in their primary languages that are similar. For example, for Spanish speakers, words with the /i/ and /ee/ sounds will need more practice: "ship" and "sheep" or "sit" and "seat" will take more practice. There are sets of minimal pairs for specific languages available online that can be found using a language-specific internet search and the target

Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO exist in student's primary language as the same or approximate sound articulation	Sound(s) and sound pattern(s) DO NOT exist in student's primary language

languages and that they will be able to also work toward the articulation in English as well.
 	
○ asking additional questions if a student's responses do not match the precise pronunciation in English during assessment in order to determine if the student comprehends and giving them credit if so. For example, when a Spanish speaker replaces a /v/ sound with a /b/ sound on its own or in words like "van" or "vase," ask the student to:
 	
   ■ "sky draw" or use motion to represent the word;
   ■ describe the item in another way or use it in a sentence;
   ■ point to the letter or picture representing the word; and/or
   ■ listen to the sounds articulated from the teacher and indicate which one they were trying to articulate themselves.
 	
*See note in step 2 of the "suggested process for annotating scope and sequence" section above.
 	
● **Practice writing.** If a sound exists in both languages, but the written form is not the same, provide modeling and additional writing practice with forming the new letter.
 	
See strategy 1 in Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Foundational Skills Instruction for additional examples.
	sound (e.g., minimal pairs in Arabic, or minimal pairs for [sound] and [sound]).
	
	● **Integrate with content.** Throughout the learning day, when sounds and sound patterns surface in conversation or within a text, periodically call attention to them and ask the student(s) to decode, orally repeat, or both as appropriate.
	
	See strategy 3 in Being Responsive to Multilingual Learners in Foundation Skills Instruction for additional examples.

Note: Each option in the above table presents opportunities for collaboration. Grade-level teachers, language specialists, speech and language pathologists, etc. can create a shared space to upload resources and tools (e.g., curricular video links, activity directions and materials, instructional strategies) to move students to proficiency.