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# Open Minds and Hearts

Diverse Learners in Lutheran Schools and Congregations  
by Margarita Jimenez Silva, Ed.D.

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LEA Monograph  
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## About the Author

Dr. Margarita Jimenez Silva is the eldest of five children born to Abel and Juanita Jimenez, Mexican immigrants. Raised in San Fernando Valley, she attended public elementary schools during the busing era of the 1970s and later private Lutheran junior and senior schools, where she thrived academically and socially. To earn a living and pay for costly tuition expenses, she and her family earned a living by delivering newspapers, selling goods at the swap meet, and working as janitors after school in the high school the Jimenez children attended.

After graduating from First Lutheran High School in Sylmar, California, Dr. Jimenez Silva attended Concordia University in Irvine, California, where she earned a bachelors degree in Liberal Studies and completed requirements for the California Clear Teaching Credential.

Since Dr. Jimenez Silva found her student teaching experiences in Santa Ana to be personally satisfying and challenging, she resolved to broaden her understanding of the critical education issues facing English Language Learners by returning to the academy to earn a Masters degree in education at Harvard University. In 1992, Dr. Jimenez Silva graduated from the Harvard Graduate School of Education with an Ed.M. in Human Development and Psychology. In 2002, she was awarded an Ed.D. in Human Development and Psychology, focusing on studies in Language in Culture. Her doctoral dissertation investigated the effects that California Proposition 227 had on Santa Ana's first grade teachers.

While completing her graduate work, Dr. Margarita Jimenez Silva taught in the public schools, preschool through middle school grades. In Oakland, she taught for three years in California's first Bilingual charter school, where she developed a newcomer program. She also served as a teaching fellow at the University of California at Berkeley for "Race and Ethnicity in the Classroom," an undergraduate course.

Dr. Jimenez Silva was deeply influenced by her experiences in nonpublic and public schools and being raised in a traditional Mexican household. Her commitment to issues of diversity and equity have served as a guiding force for her work in the field of teacher education.

Dr. Jimenez Silva is currently an Associate Professor of Education at Concordia University in Irvine, her alma mater. She teaches courses in psychology, multicultural education, language acquisition, emergent literacy, and qualitative research methods. Dr. Jimenez Silva also serves on various school boards and is actively engaged in community outreach programs that target current and future teachers working with diverse populations. Dr. Margarita Jimenez Silva is passionate about her work and enjoys sharing her love of teaching and learning with her two youngest students, sons Daniel (age 7) and Benjamin (age 6).

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## Foreword

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### Discussion Guide

Add value to your reading of this *LEA Monograph*. Use the PowerPoint® discussion slides or pdf print discussion questions accessible through the LEA Web site at [www.lea.org](http://www.lea.org). Click on “Resources” and look for “Open Minds and Hearts” under Monographs Bonus Features.

This *LEA Monograph* includes slide cues in the left margin. For example: < ppt 1 > refers to an appropriate location to view Slide 1.

### More About Diversity

LEA’s Mission Minded Educators Network (MMEnet) maintains information and tips that help educators to understand and work with students of diverse cultures. LEA members are welcome to use “Culture Clues & Cues” accessible from [www.lea.org](http://www.lea.org). Click on “Networks” and click on “Mission Minded Educators Network.”

Praise God.  
And read this  
*LEA*  
*Monograph!*

Diversity is a foreign concept in many Lutheran schools and other educational agencies operated by Lutheran congregations. But the term will not remain foreign, nor should it.

Pentecost made clear God’s intent to spread the Gospel to all nations. One mighty spark of spiritual creativity enabled disciples—teachers—to overcome language barriers. But language was not the only obstacle to teaching the faith. In fact, language was only an academic obstruction. Other elements of culture would snag progress in proclaiming the Gospel.

Amazingly, choice of food threatened to choke progress. Some early Christians insisted on a diet consistent with their upbringing as devout Jews. But those who most needed to digest God’s Law and Gospel were thought unworthy to participate in the feast of Christ’s victory, because their ethnic diet defied traditional tastes. God intervened (Acts 10), unveiling an ethnic buffet to Peter, who submitted to allowing God’s menu.

The Apostle Paul might rightly be identified as God’s teacher in the early Christian church who most ambitiously addressed diversity issues. He hardened the soles of his feet tramping from group to group and softened the souls of new believers with the good news of salvation. Allowing no barriers to prevent the spread of God’s Word, the Holy Spirit used Paul to bridge barriers that normally kept people apart.

*The same Spirit who empowered Peter and Paul empowers you. The same Spirit who provided Paul a passion for reaching the lost and nurturing the saved impassions you. And the same Satan who desperately tried to prevent the earliest Christian teachers from crossing both geographic and cultural boundaries tries to thwart education in Lutheran settings today.*

The ministry of most who read this *LEA Monograph* is peaceful—even easy—compared to what Paul faced when he took Christian education on the road. Yet, some Lutherans may be apathetic at best, antagonistic at worst, to the age-old demands of addressing diversity within the framework of Lutheran education in schools, Sunday schools, VBS, weekday schools, and so forth. Are these attitudes not what God addressed in Peter’s dream?

Please do not ignore this *LEA Monograph*—even if all your students are the same color, speak the same language, eat the same foods, and worship the same Triune God. Diversity in school enrollment and congregation membership has already filtered into some of the most unlikely areas. And what a blessing from God! It’s coming to you too. Instead of traveling dusty and dangerous roads to make and nurture disciples, the Holy Spirit is delivering them to your doorsteps!

Praise God. And read this *LEA Monograph!*

The Editor

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## Introduction

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*God has provided us with a richness of diversity so that we may learn from each other and experience His greatness.*

Regardless of the setting in which you teach, *diversity* is an issue you may have encountered or will encounter. Our classrooms, congregations, and communities, both within and outside the Lutheran church, are changing in many ways. We have increasing numbers of students and families who come from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

As the populations of some ethnic minorities have increased at greater rates than the majority population (Marshall, 2002), dramatic demographic shifts have occurred in the communities where many of our congregations are located. For some congregations, these demographic shifts have resulted in dwindling church membership. For others, these shifts have led to multi-ethnic congregations.

For some school-affiliated congregations, the demographic shifts have resulted in school populations that may not reflect church membership (e.g., race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status). Given these factors, and in light of our call as Christians to minister to *all* our brothers and sisters, Lutheran education must actively participate in the diversity discussion. After all, God has provided us with a richness of diversity so that we may learn from each other and experience His greatness. By working together with people who are different from us, we enrich our own lives and the lives of others.

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## Colorblind Perspective

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*... ignoring the reality of cultural differences and failing to respond to and capitalize on diversity works to the disadvantage of all students.*

A common assertion of teachers is that when they look at their students, they do not see color. They simply see children. Rist (1974) has stated that a colorblind society is one in which racial or ethnic group membership is irrelevant to the way individuals are treated. The colorblind perspective thrives on some of our school campuses and in some of our congregations. We are told that God knows us all as individuals. He has a personal relationship with each of us. We as teachers and leaders in our congregations need to know our students and parishioners as individuals as well.

The colorblind perspective may in some cases become the culture of a school or congregation. Schofield (2001) examined a school where the colorblind perspective was accepted and found that in such schools a number of corollaries to this perspective exist. Race was seen as an invisible characteristic. It was believed that individuals should not notice each other's racial group membership. Race was seen as a taboo topic, which should not be brought up. Many teachers in Schofield's study believed that by not acknowledging differences, they reduced the potential for conflict, discomfort, and embarrassment. This simplified life for school staff.

Schofield (2001), however, argues that ignoring the reality of cultural differences and failing to respond to and capitalize on diversity works to the disadvantage of all students. Similarly, when educators in Lutheran ministries and other church leaders do not "see" differences, it works to the disadvantage of all whom we serve. We forfeit opportunities to witness to others in effective ways.

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In missionary experiences, both within and outside our communities, we must understand our audience in order to effectively deliver our message. If we fail to gain others' respect by unintentionally offending them due to a lack of cultural knowledge, we miss the opportunity to share our message. Also, we fail to teach our students how to function effectively within a diverse world. We do our students no favor by creating a bubble in which diversity is not discussed. We need to prepare students for the outside world where issues of diversity, including being a Christian in a secular community, cannot be ignored. Furthermore, in attempting to adhere to a colorblind perspective, our message becomes wedded to cultural norms that we unintentionally impose on students or members of our congregations. Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961) have stated that individuals acquire values that reflect the cultural group to which they belong. They identified various orientations addressing issues such as human nature, the relationship between person and nature, time sense, and social relations.

Lecca, Quervalu, Nunez, and Gonzalez (1998) found that African Americans, Hispanics, Asian Pacific Americans, and Native Americans, in general, have different value orientations from middle-class white Americans. Marshall (2002) states that a teacher's values will influence her or his perceptions of teaching, schooling, and society at large. Those values will also affect how a teacher views issues of parent involvement and classroom management.

*... acknowledge and respect differences while at the same time making our expectations explicit and giving students and congregation members the tools to function in different cultures.*

In Lutheran congregations and schools, teachers' cultural values could impact what they see as appropriate expressions of faith, not because of theological issues but because of cultural norms. The call-and-response style of African American storytelling may be seen as disrespectful in worship services. The fact that Latino children may retell a biblical story with many tangents may be seen as distracting and yet would be a reflection of that culture's storytelling traditions. By not acknowledging the cultural and language differences, we may alienate the very students we are trying to reach with God's message.

The key to balancing the cultural differences that are present in most classrooms and churches is to acknowledge and respect differences while at the same time making our expectations explicit and giving students and congregation members the tools to function in different cultures. By understanding and appreciating the value of seeing the world through multiple lenses, we empower students and ourselves to build relationships that lead to more effective teaching and learning. As Christians, we must start by seeing differences in order to develop the most effective plan for teaching, whether the subject matter is science, math, or the Word of God.

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## Multicultural Education

**M**ulticultural education emerged from various programs, practices, and strategies that educational institutions developed to respond to the needs of various groups (Banks, 2001). No single definition of multicultural education exists. As educators, we use the term to describe a wide variety of programs and strategies. Multicultural education can encompass issues

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of educational equity, gender, ethnicity, language, socio-economic status, religion, student disabilities, student giftedness, and lifestyle choices.

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As Lutheran educators, it is imperative to address what specifically we choose to include under the umbrella term of multicultural education. We must be prepared to discuss with parents, colleagues, and students the issues we intend to address as well as the strategies that will be incorporated into the classroom.

In this monograph, the definition of multiculturalism is limited to a discussion about how we can incorporate issues of ethnic cultural heritage and language, and specific strategies for addressing these two areas.

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## Importance of Developing Relationships

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*The most important aspect of addressing issues of diversity ... is to develop relationships with the students.*

The most important aspect of addressing issues of diversity, within or outside the context of multicultural education, is to develop relationships with the students. A recipe book approach to addressing issues of diversity does not exist. There is no magic book where you can look up, for example, “second-generation Korean boy, age 8, living in Southern California” and get all the answers for how to best meet this child’s needs. Likewise, there is no listing for “young Latino couple” in the congregation handbook. You must expend time and energy to establish a relationship with each person if you truly want to address their needs and reach them effectively.

Books that teach about cultural differences are helpful as starting points. All of us belong to multiple microcultures (Banks, 2001). We may be women, Lutherans, educators, wives, Latinas. We belong to various microcultures, each with its own standards and expectations. The combination of those microcultures in which we hold membership make each of us unique individuals, which will affect how we make sense of the world, how we learn, and perhaps even how we grow in faith. By spending time with individuals whom we serve, we learn more about those individuals and can best adapt our teaching strategies and/or outreach methods.

### Personally Speaking

*As a teacher in middle school, I often spent the first two weeks of school getting to know my students and working on relationships. One of my favorite activities was developing life maps. On a poster board, I developed a chronological map of my life with important events and milestones. I incorporated pictures and artifacts wherever possible. I told my students about where I was born, my siblings, my cultural background, my educational experiences, my hobbies, and my goals for the year. I then gave students time and materials to develop their own life maps. Students could also bring pictures or artifacts from home to share with their classmates.*

*As I shared my life map with students and they shared their own with the class, we began building relationships with each other. I learned many important facts about my students, which helped me develop my teaching strategies, influenced the year’s curriculum and learning goals, and helped me develop classroom management plans. I learned important details such as the country of origin of my students, their dominant language, their past educational experiences, and their learning goals for the year. I also learned which students were the class leaders and learning style preferences for certain students.*

*By sharing my life map first, I believe students are more willing to share their own life maps. Many other activities would also accomplish this goal of building relationships. Based on Lomas Garza’s Family Pictures (1990) book, I shared with students three of my favorite “Family Pictures.” I told what I do on Sundays, how we celebrate Christmas in my home, and about my quinceañera party celebrated when Mexican girls turn 15 years of age. Student then would create their own “Family Pictures” and would share them with the class. As a teacher, I was made aware of lots of important information, which would help me develop a relationship with my students. Other activities that would meet this same goal include “All About Me” activities and autobiographical assignments.*

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## Building a Safe and Caring Environment

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*The responsibility of classroom teachers and church leaders is to model how to address issues of diversity.*

*... teachers focus on incorporating heroes/heroines and holidays into the standard school curriculum.*

Peregoy and Boyle (2001) state that one basic strategy for helping students ease into classroom routines when they know little or no English is to create a classroom environment in which they feel safe, secure, and develop a sense of belonging. By meeting those needs, students are more apt to develop language and academic abilities. This is true for all children, not just the English language learners. Adult learners in our church communities will also be more open to listening to our messages if they are in an environment that is safe and caring.

This writer's study of first-grade teachers of English language learners found that 80 percent of teachers feel that creating a safe and caring environment is fundamental to helping students from diverse backgrounds learn effectively (Jimenez-Silva, 2002). By building quality relationships between teacher and students and among students, we are better able to create a community of learners where we appreciate diversity and where students come to understand that God has created us all as unique individuals. We come to understand that not everyone shares our backgrounds, experiences, and viewpoints.

The responsibility of classroom teachers and church leaders is to model how to address issues of diversity. Students need to be shown how to listen to each other respectfully and discuss differences. In order for this to happen, the classroom has to be considered a safe and caring place where no one will be verbally attacked for expressing a point of view that differs from the majority's standpoint.

In Lutheran schools or church communities, it becomes difficult when someone disagrees with theological issues. In a community that is safe and caring, we can calmly discuss the differences. If we choose to attack and simply tell our students or church members they are wrong, neither side has accomplished anything. Through calm discussions and respectful dialogue, we can be most effective in regard to Lutheran teachings.

Addressing Issues of Cultural Heritage through Multicultural Education  
Banks (2001) has identified four approaches to the integration of multicultural education into the curriculum.

### Level 1: Contributions Approach

At the first level, Banks identifies the *contributions approach* as the most frequently used approach. At this level, teachers focus on incorporating heroes/heroines and holidays into the standard school curriculum. Discrete cultural elements may also be incorporated. Ethnic content is limited primarily to special days, weeks, and months related to ethnic events and celebrations. A classroom teacher at this level may expose students to individuals such as Booker T. Washington and Cesar Chavez and may display specific artifacts when celebrating *Cinco de Mayo*. However, little attention is given to the meanings of specific cultural elements and their importance within ethnic communities. The main-stream curriculum remains unchanged in its basic goals and structure.

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The *contributions approach* allows teachers to quickly integrate ethnic content into the curriculum. Teachers often ask which cultures they should integrate and how they should choose holidays or individuals to emphasize. It is impossible to incorporate every holiday and every hero or heroine into the curriculum. Teachers should get to know their students and understand their backgrounds. A first step is to include holidays and individuals that represent the students in the class. As our experience expands, we can build a repertoire of activities and a personal library reflective of as many cultures as possible.

## Level 2: Additive Approach

The *additive approach* is the second level, and Banks (2001) states that content, themes, concepts, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure. This approach is often accomplished by adding a book, a unit, or a course to the standard curriculum without changing the curriculum substantially. An example of this would be to show a video of the internment of Japanese Americans during a study of World War II in a class on U.S. History.

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The *additive approach* allows teachers to add ethnic content into the curriculum without going through the process of restructuring, which would take substantial time, training, and effort as well as a rethinking of the purpose, nature, and goal of the existing curriculum (Banks, 2001). The most serious disadvantage, according to Banks (2001), is that this approach usually results in the viewing of ethnic content from the perspectives of historians, artists, writers, and scientists who represent the mainstream. Furthermore, this approach may hinder students' ability to view society from diverse cultural and ethnic perspectives and to understand how the histories and cultures of our nation's diverse groups are interconnected (Banks, 2001).

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## Level 3: Transformation Approach

The *transformation approach* is the third level of Banks' (2001) approaches, and it differs fundamentally from the prior two approaches. In this approach, the fundamental goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum are changed to enable students to view issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view. Banks (2001) acknowledges that it is neither possible nor desirable to view every issue, concept, or event from every ethnic point of view. Instead, he states that the goal should be to enable students to view issues from more than one perspective. Furthermore, the point of view of the cultural and ethnic groups that were the most affected by any one issue or event should be included as integral aspects of our studies. Banks (2001) adds that the key to curriculum issues should be the infusion of various frames of reference, perspectives, and content from different groups, which will extend students' understanding of the development, complexity, and nature of U.S. society. As an example, Banks (2001) states that in studying the revolution in British colonies, it is

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and points of view.

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essential that students examine the perspectives of Anglo revolutionaries, Anglo loyalists, African Americans, Indians, and the British. Gay and Banks (1975) state that to fully understand the significance of historical events, students should study the various and divergent meanings of events as understood by the diverse groups involved.

*... adds various components that require students to make decisions and take actions related to the concept, issues, or problem studied in the classroom.*

### Level 4: Social Action Approach

The fourth and final level of Banks' (2001) approaches is the *social action approach*. This approach includes all elements of the transformation approach but adds various components that require students to make decisions and take actions related to the concept, issues, or problem studied in the classroom (Banks & Banks with Clegg, 1999). The major goals of this approach include educating students for social criticism and social change as well as teaching students decision-making skills. In this approach, Banks (2001) states that teachers are agents of social change who promote democratic values and the empowerment of students.

Teaching units that are organized using the *social action approach* have the following components:

- > A decision-problem or question (e.g. What actions should we take to reduce prejudice and discrimination in our school?)
- > An inquiry that provides data related to the decision-problem
- > Value inquiry and moral analysis
- > Decision-making and social action

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Banks (2001) has stated that the four approaches for the integration of multicultural content into the curriculum are often mixed and blended in the actual classroom. He also adds that the move from the first to higher levels of integration is usually a gradual and cumulative process.

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## Addressing Issues of Language

*We are seeing congregations develop English language programs as an outreach opportunity. Our Lutheran schools are seeing an influx of immigrant students or children of immigrants whose first exposure to English may be in the classroom.*

Some people claim that “good teaching is good teaching” and that good teaching is all that is needed to address the needs of English language learners (ELL). Good teaching **is** essential to working with ELL students, but it is also essential that teachers are conscious of the specific teaching strategies that will develop students' language skills.

As stated previously, Lutheran schools and congregations are becoming increasingly diverse in terms of language. We are seeing congregations develop English language programs as an outreach opportunity. Our Lutheran schools are seeing an influx of immigrant students or children of immigrants whose first exposure to English may be in the classroom. Therefore, it is imperative that we discuss specific strategies for teaching English and content areas to speakers of other languages.

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*... expressions and phrases needed to interact socially with one's peers.*

## Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills

An important distinction must be made between language used for basic social interaction and language used for academic purposes. Cummins (1980) states that Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are the language skills needed for social conversational purposes. In other words, BICS can be referred to as *playground talk*. It includes expressions and phrases needed to interact socially with one's peers. Peregoy and Boyle (2001) have stated that students can develop BICS in English within six months to two years after being exposed to the target language.

*... formal language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing ...*

## Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency

Cummins (1980) refers to formal language skills, including speaking, listening, reading, and writing, as CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). Researchers, such as Cummins (1979) and Thomas and Collier (1995), have found that CALP may take five to seven years or even as long as ten years to develop at a level commensurate with that of native English-speaking peers.

The distinction between BICS and CALP is an important one because it helps us understand why some students seem proficient in English when we observe them on the playground interacting with peers, and at the same time, those students are struggling academically. Likewise, it makes us aware that even though congregation members or members of our youth groups can carry on conversations with us, it may be difficult for them to grasp more complex sentence structures and abstract theological ideas in sermons and lessons. We must remember that these are two separate areas of language learning and that the process is long and difficult.

## Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English

Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) refers to instruction specifically tailored to help students to understand teachers' instructions, allowing them to participate in learning activities (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). SDAIE, a term developed by the California State Department of Education (1994), focuses on grade appropriate, cognitively demanding core curriculum for English language learners who have achieved an intermediate or advanced level of English language proficiency.

*... instruction specifically tailored to help students to understand teachers' instructions*

For students who have beginning levels of proficiency in English, experts disagree as to whether bilingual instruction is the most effective method for meeting their needs. The reality of our times is that many schools and congregations lack qualified personnel who can provide quality bilingual instruction, and, with the recent passage of such laws as Proposition 227 in California, bilingual education is no longer a viable option. Therefore, SDAIE is the method of instruction preferred for all language learners, regardless of proficiency levels.

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*Students' comprehension should be supported by planning ways to accompany instructional talks with visuals, direct experience, or other nonverbal means . . .*

SDAIE can be used at all grade levels, and there are various strategies within SDAIE which can be used in congregational settings. The four major elements of SDAIE include *Goals and Objectives*, *Flexible Groupings*, *Instructional Features*, and *Multidimensional Assessment*.

When implementing the element of *Goals and Objectives*, teachers should address issues of content learning, language development, and social/affective adjustment. The *Flexible Groupings* element reminds us that classroom instruction should include both small group and whole-class instruction as well as cooperative and collaborative groups. Furthermore, students should be grouped both heterogeneously and homogeneously, depending on the activity. Within the *Instructional Features* element, teachers should incorporate thematic studies, scaffolding activities to address both oral and written language development, and language-sensitive lesson modifications. The final element, *Multidimensional Assessment*, is critical. This element includes the use of both formal and informal assessment tools, including standardized tests, portfolios, running records, and anecdotal observations.

Peregoy and Boyle (2001) state that when planning English learner instruction, teachers should include content, language, and social/affective objectives. Teachers can begin by establishing content objectives within the framework of a theme. They emphasize that for students to learn content material, teachers must build in multiple opportunities for English learners to understand and process the material. This can be done through a variety of groupings of students. No students can learn language effectively without opportunities for interaction.

For many children or adults in our parishes and schools, the desire to communicate with others is the main goal and the motivation for learning English. The more opportunities we provide for students to interact with proficient English speakers, the faster they become proficient in English. Through individual, whole-class, and small group activities, we can provide social interaction opportunities that concern social/affective objectives such as interpersonal relationships, empathy and self-esteem (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Because it can take more time for students to understand cognitively demanding, grade-appropriate material in a non-native language, teachers may need to adjust the amount of material to cover. Teachers need to carefully review and evaluate the curriculum to select the aspects that are essential to students' academic development and success (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). Teachers must also remember to adjust the cognitive load without compromising the cognitive level or the grade-appropriateness of the material (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Scaffolding and creating language-related lesson modifications are also critical to the success of English learners. Students' comprehension should be supported by planning ways to accompany instructional talks with visuals, direct experience, or other nonverbal means to help students understand the lesson's content (Carbo & Kapinus, 1995; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

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When discussing with first grade teachers the most effective means of aiding comprehension, all of the teachers emphasized the use of visuals and realia—activities or objects that relate classroom lessons to real life (Jimenez-Silva, 2002). Wong Fillmore (1985) has addressed the importance of having access to English. Krashen (1981) has stated that input has to be comprehensible to be of use for students.

*... language-related lesson modifications were critical when working with English language learners.*

Seventy percent of the teachers in one study (Jimenez-Silva, 2002) stated that language-related lesson modifications were critical when working with English language learners. These modifications include slowing down the speech register, enunciating clearly, and avoiding slang and idioms. Teachers should plan how to get their point across, including how to phrase their talk, identifying the vocabulary that will be used, how to define new words in context, and how to rephrase information.

Jimenez-Silva (2002) found that all teachers in the study focused on multidimensional assessment in their classrooms. Teachers described the role of assessment as “driving” or “guiding” their instruction. They saw assessment as beneficial for both themselves and the students. One teacher stated that using various assessment tools was like looking into a house through various windows, each giving you a different perspective. SDAIE techniques include using a variety of tools in order to guide teachers’ instruction both in terms of content and language development.

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## Conclusion

**T**he issue of diversity must be addressed within the context of Lutheran schools and congregations. We can no longer afford to be colorblind and not “see” differences among our students or congregation members. If we are to be effective teachers or church leaders, we must develop the relationships that are crucial to our work. We must create environments where individuals feel safe and cared for regardless of their backgrounds. By addressing issues of cultural heritage and language, we can be more effective in teaching content areas or theological beliefs.

The costs of ignoring the diversity that exists within our schools and churches is too high. For many congregations, refusing to address these issues means permanently closing their doors. For schools, enrollment may decline. Most important, if we are not effective communicators of our content areas or of our faith, we fail to share the wonders God has prepared for us both in this world and in the next.

*If we model Christian love and respect for each other, our students and others are more willing to hear our message with open minds and hearts.*

We are called to teach others about God. In that context, it is imperative that we learn to appreciate the diversity with which He has blessed our classrooms, our churches, and our communities. If we model Christian love and respect for each other, our students and others are more willing to hear our message with open minds and hearts.

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