

**THE**  
**CALLA**<sup>TM</sup>  
**H A N D B O O K**

*Implementing the  
Cognitive Academic  
Language Learning  
Approach*

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### **What's Difficult in Literature and Composition for ESL Students?**

- ❖ Literature reflects cultural values, shared knowledge, and discourse organization which may be different from that of students' native cultures.
- ❖ The rich variety of vocabulary in literature may make the text difficult to understand; in composition, finding appropriate words to express intended meaning may not be easy.
- ❖ The full range of language functions and structures in literature and other authentic texts can lead to comprehension and expression difficulties.
- ❖ Students may lack learning strategies to assist comprehension and to develop writing ability.

### ***Teaching Guidelines for CALLA Literature and Composition***

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CALLA literature and composition lessons should provide students with varied knowledge and experiences that reflect many of the objectives and types of activities that they can expect to encounter later in grade-level classrooms. Students also need to learn reading and writing strategies that can be used in all areas of the curriculum. We believe that spending time investigating many facets of a small number of novels and stories is more valuable to ESL students than trying to read through a large collection of selections. When students have an opportunity to explore a few works in depth they have time to think through meanings, inferences, and cultural allusions, building a deeper understanding of a piece of literature. This deeper processing of a reduced number of literary selections is more valuable than superficial processing of a larger number of selections because it provides students with the opportunity of engaging higher-level thinking skills with literature.

Similarly in composition, ESL students need to experience higher-level thinking skills as they find their own voices to express their ideas through building, extending, revising, and editing their written production. Taking the time to craft and polish a single piece of writing teaches ESL students how to use linguistic forms and devices to create a written message that communicates the author's thoughts clearly.

An important reason for emphasizing depth rather than breadth in literature and composition is that it allows students the time needed for developing strategies to comprehend text and to write communicatively. When the CALLA teacher models and provides instruction in learning strategies for a limited amount of reading and writing, students can focus their attention on using the strategies to comprehend and appreciate different aspects of a work of literature and for planning, composing, and revising a piece of writing.

In this section we suggest guidelines and activities for CALLA literature and composition lessons, including identifying content related to student interest and background knowledge, setting academic language objectives, teaching learning strategies for reading and writing, and organizing instruction into the five phases of the CALLA instructional sequence.

Table 12.1

## LEARNING STRATEGIES FOR LITERATURE AND COMPOSITION

<b>Metacognitive Strategies:</b>	Students plan, monitor, and evaluate their understanding of literature and development of writing skills.
Advance Organization	Can the title and chapter headings help me get a general idea of what this story is about?
Selective Attention	What are the most important parts of the story to pay attention to?
Organizational Planning	What's my purpose for reading, listening, speaking or writing? How should I organize my story, book report, or presentation? How do I begin and end? What's the best sequence of ideas or events? How can I describe and present the characters?
Self-monitoring	Am I understanding this? Does it make sense? Am I achieving my purpose? How is this task going? Do I need to make any changes right now?
Self-assessment	Did I understand this story or poem? What was the main point I got from reading or listening? How do I feel about the story and characters? What revisions are necessary in my writing? Do I need more information? Should I re-read?
<b>Cognitive Strategies:</b>	Students interact with literature and composition experiences, relating it to what they know and personalizing or organizing the material to understand and appreciate it.
Elaborating Prior Knowledge	What do I already know about this type of literature or writing? What experiences have I had that are related to this? How does this information relate to other things I know about literature or writing?
Taking Notes	What's the best way to write down what I need to remember? Outline? Chart? List? Diagram? Story map? Drawing?
Grouping	How can I classify the characters or events in this story? Can I organize this information graphically?
Making Inferences	What does this word or phrase probably mean? What clues can I use? What predictions can I make?
Summarizing	What's the most important information to remember about this story? Should my summary be oral, written, or mental?
Using Imagery	What can I learn from the illustrations, diagrams, and pictures in the text? Can I draw something to help me understand this story? Can I make a mental picture or visualize this event or place or character?
Linguistic Transfer	Are there any words, prefixes, or suffixes that I recognize because of their similarity to my native language?
<b>Social/Affective Strategies:</b>	Students interact with peers, teachers, and other adults to assist learning, or use attitudes or feelings to assist learning.
Questioning for Clarification	Who should I ask for additional explanation or correction or suggestions? How should I ask?
Cooperating	How can I work with friends or classmates to understand this or complete this task or improve what I have written or presented orally?
Self-talk	Yes, I can do this—I just need the right strategies!