

# Book Review

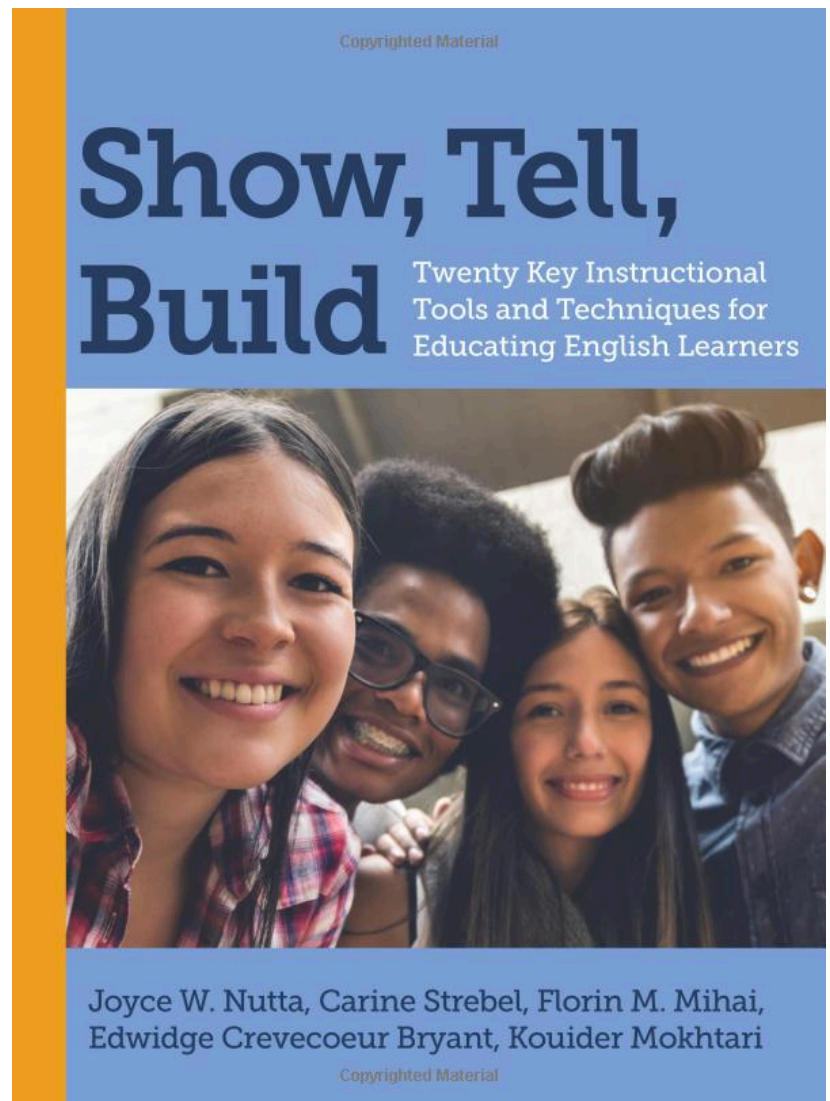
## A paradigm shift in EL instruction: Exploring *Show, Tell, Build*

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Nutta, J., Strebler, C., Mihai, F., Bryant, E., & Mokhtari, K. (2018). *Show, tell, build: Twenty key instructional tools and techniques for educating English learners*. Harvard Education Press.

Only recently did I come across *Show, Tell, Build*. However, it is a work I wish I had read much earlier in my seven-year English language teaching career at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. *Show, Tell, Build* is an excellent work that addresses the needs of ELLs taught alongside their English-proficient peers. The book is a must-read for educators, administrators, and parents of English language learners, as it presents an array of instructional techniques and tools to meet the needs of ELLs regardless of students' grade levels, proficiency levels, and subject areas. As an instructor for English as a Second Language (ESL), I believe that this book offers valuable insights on how to mitigate the performance disparity between English Language Learners (ELLs) and students who are native English speakers.

According to the authors, the motivation for writing the book is the increasing number of ELLs in U.S. schools and the persistent achievement gap between these students and their English-speaking peers (p.1). Despite this there remains a limited availability of practical resources that provide clear guidance on how to teach ELLs. Existing resources often present ELLs as a homogenous group, failing to recognize the diversity within this population and the different needs of individual students. Nutta et al. fill this gap by providing a practical guide grounded in research. The book presents 20 key instructional tools and techniques teachers can use to help ELLs achieve academic success. *Show, Tell, Build* is built upon the theoretical and practical foundation of their previous book *Educating English*



*Learners*, in which the authors suggest various practical tools that teachers can integrate into their classrooms. For example, the "Show" strategy encourages teachers to use visuals and real-life examples (i.e., models, realia) to help ELLs comprehend complex concepts, which can benefit all learners in the classroom. The "Tell" strategy emphasizes the importance of clear and concise language in instruction and support for reading and writing (i.e., leveled text, modified text, sentence frame) which can improve communication between teachers and parents of ELLs. The "Build" strategy encourages teachers to scaffold learning and provide opportunities for ELLs to practice language skills in authentic contexts (i.e., instructional conversations, learning new language through songs and poems), which can improve academic achievement for all learners. Thus, the book helps the whole school community—teachers, administrators, and parents—to build a support system for the ELL students' academic learning improvement and close the achievement gap between ELLs and their English-speaking peers.

The organization of the book includes ten chapters describing different tools and techniques that teachers can apply in the EL classrooms. Part I, The Academic Subject Protocol, consists of ten chapters focusing on the theory and practice that play an important role in teaching academic subjects to English learners. For instance, one chapter delves into using "realia" or real-life objects in the classroom to help learners connect new vocabulary or concepts with tangible items, enhancing their comprehension and recall. Part II, The Language Arts Protocol, consists of ten chapters exploring verbal and nonverbal communication. While Part I emphasizes learning the subject through language, Part II stresses the importance of acquiring and gaining knowledge about the

language. For example, in one of these chapters, the authors highlight the value of 'total physical response' (TPR) techniques. This method involves students physically acting out verbs or concepts to strengthen their understanding and recall of new language elements. In the book's final section, the authors revisit the implications of these two protocols in EL-integrated classrooms and offer advice for teachers on broadening their tool use and technique application. This segment supplies various examples and instructional guidelines for educators.

While *Show, Tell, Build* provides valuable techniques and strategies for language learners, its applicability may be limited in certain settings and countries for several possible reasons, such as cultural differences, education system, and sociopolitical factors. Additionally, the book primarily focuses on classroom-based instruction and does not address the broader sociocultural and political contexts that impact ELLs such as immigration, discrimination, and biases. These reasons may limit the direct application of the strategies outlined in *Show, Tell, Build* across diverse settings and countries, though the core principles might still provide valuable insights for educators everywhere.

In a nutshell, the authors of this book walk the reader through each strategy and provide examples of how to best implement it. The strategies are practical and easy to use, making the text an invaluable resource for any teacher of English language learners. With such solid information and impactful examples, *Show, Tell, Build* is an important resource for practitioners attempting to help language learners acquire English skills, which in turn impacts ELLs' ability to succeed academically.

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