Strategies to Teach and Engage English Language Learners in Mathematics

knowledge of these words, it will be difficult to solve this problem. To help ELLs, this problem can be paraphrased as suggested below.

Simplification: Thomas' pay is $30,000 a year. He will also get $2,000 more each year. How much will he get paid 5 years later?

Elaboration: Thomas earns $30,000 a year. This means his pay is $30,000. He is promised a $2,000 raise each year. To get a raise means that he will get $2,000 more each year. At this rate, what will be his salary in 5 years? Salary means the total amount that he will get paid.

ELLs should be provided many opportunities to use their new language and mathematics skills as part of the mathematics learning community. To ensure that this occurs, teachers must find ways to incorporate ELLs as contributing members of the class. To do this effectively, teachers must be familiar with the language and mathematical development of individual ELLs and provide opportunities that allow them to showcase their skills. This might involve strategically finding opportunities for students to speak in small- and large-group settings. Teachers can "set ELLs up for success" by providing opportunities for them to rehearse what they will say, to correct the vocabulary they will use, and to gain confidence prior to sharing their ideas with peers. In addition, ELLs can be encouraged to use multiple means (e.g., concrete materials, drawings) to convey their ideas. Planning strategic opportunities for ELL engagement reinforces the idea that they are a valuable and contributing part of the learning community.

The strategies listed above represent a few approaches that can be used to support ELLs in the mathematics classroom. Overall, teachers must use whatever means necessary to engage ELLs and provide them access to and opportunity to learn mathematics.

References

Usiskin, Z. (1996) Mathematics is a language. In Portia C. Elliot and Margaret J. Kenny (Eds.), *B* VA: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics.