

# Understanding ESL Learners: Teaching in the Content Areas



The purpose of this pamphlet is to suggest some ways that you as a classroom teacher can accommodate the needs of the ESL learner in the regular classroom. The challenge is to support the learning of subject area or curriculum content while the ESL student is acquiring English as their second language

- For more information, contact the English as a Second Language Council of The Alberta Teachers' Association.

Here are some simple strategies that can be incorporated into your instruction plans or can be taught to ESL students.

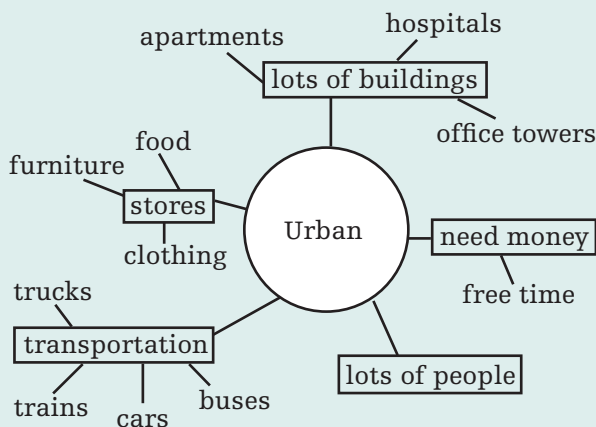
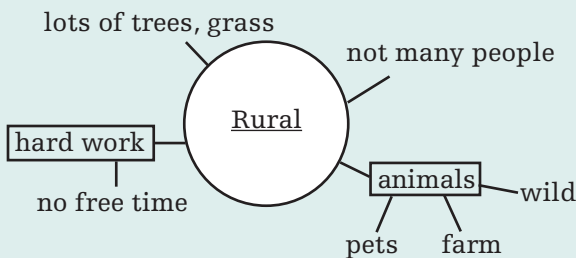
- Present new information by linking it to the student's own knowledge about the topic.

KWL Chart

	Immigration	
What do we know?	What do we want to know?	What have we learned?

- Simplify text through the use of graphic organizers.

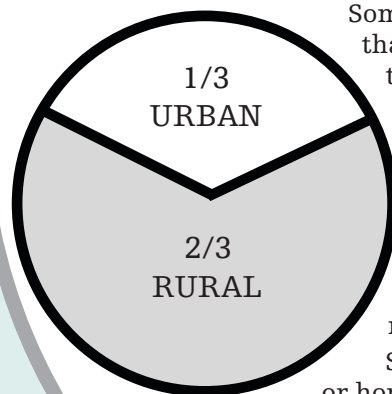
Webs



Urban Pioneer  
Life in Cities

**Immigration**

From 1896 to 1912, many immigrants came from Europe to Canada. Many of them settled in the areas that are now the provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan. The government especially wanted farmers.



Some people didn't have the money that it took to start a farm. They had to get loans from the government. Some Jewish Colonization Society members became farmers. Some of these people didn't have the money they got off the land. They moved to Vancouver. Other people moved inland—Montreal, Toronto, or Edmonton. It was hard to move to cities after the war. Some people found work in cities or homes. Others were...

In 1901, about one-third of all Canadians lived in cities. This left about two-thirds living in rural areas.

**City Housing**

Canadian cities had many different types of housing. The rich people—owners of big houses and large stores—had large lots of land. They built houses of brick or stone, set on large lots. Many rich people...

- Use headings from the text to organize information for note-taking.

	<i>Life in Cities</i>
○	<i>Immigration</i>
	<i>–1896-1912 people came from Europe</i>
	<i>–came to Manitoba, Saskatchewan</i>
○	<i>–government wanted farmers</i>
	<i>–no money to buy farms</i>

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ers  
ies



ave even the small amount of money  
a homestead. Some of them were able  
organizations such as churches or the  
tion Association. Others didn't want to

people stayed in the cities where  
ships—Halifax, Quebec City, or  
ers travelled by train to cities farther  
al, Toronto, Winnipeg, Regina, Calgary,  
was not unusual for some families to  
er trying farming for a few years.

d jobs in the factories, businesses,  
unemployed and very poor.

Canadians lived in cities.

n the rural areas.



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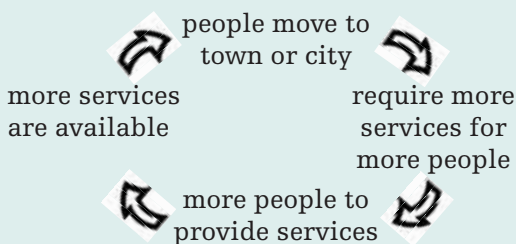
- Identify difficult words, then use one of the following strategies to learn what the words mean.
  - look up the words in a simple dictionary if they are verbs or adjectives
  - look up the words in a picture dictionary if they are nouns
  - learn the words in their first language
  - find synonyms for the words
  - draw pictures of what the words mean
- Use graphic organizers to help explain a concept.

homestead=farm  
unemployed=no job  
province=state

### Charts

Types of buildings	
Urban	Rural
stores	barns
big houses	small houses
offices	sheds
apartments	
hospitals	
schools	
churches	

### Cycles



### Timeline

1700	1725	1750	1775	1800	1825	1850	1875	1900	1925	1950	1975	2000
			first settlers arrive in Alberta									today

- Use some of the following strategies to assess the student's learning.
  - portfolios of the student's work
  - one-on-one interviews
  - observations during class
  - drawing and labelling rather than writing a report
  - anecdotal record keeping



# What we know about ESL students:

- Effective learning strategies work with many types of learners including second language learners.
- Oral language proficiency can be observed in the language that the student uses to communicate in everyday situations.
- Another level of language proficiency is the language used in academic or learning situations.
- Academic language proficiency must continue even while the student is acquiring basic oral language proficiency.
- It can take as many as 5-7 years to develop the kind of language necessary for academic achievement.
- All five language strands of reading, writing, listening, speaking and viewing should be incorporated into the learning task.
- Receptive language skills (listening, reading) usually precedes or is stronger than productive language skills (speaking, writing) so presentation of information should be done both orally and visually.
- Expectations continually need to be adjusted as the English language is acquired.
- Interaction with native English speakers is important in the acquisition of English and for the student's sense of belonging to the new school community. Therefore, ESL students should be integrated into the social and academic mainstream to the extent possible.

## Further Reading:

Tarasoff, Mary Somerville. 1993. *Reading Instruction That Makes Sense*. Active Learning, Victoria, BC. (ISBN 1895111080)

Wisconsin Dept of Public Instruction. 1991. *Strategic Learning in the Content Areas*. Wisconsin Dept of Public Instruction, PO Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841.

### Other pamphlets published by the ATA include:

- Understanding ESL Learners: Distinguishing Between BICS and CALP
- Understanding ESL Learners: Meeting Needs in the Classroom

