


Strategies For Teaching English Language Learners—

Part 4: Writing, Speaking, & Listening Practice

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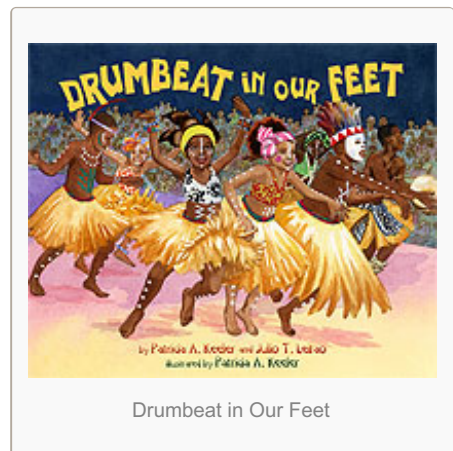


The U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Science (IES) and What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) released the latest educator's guide to present [best instructional practices for English Language Learners](#). Over the last several weeks, I've looked at [several different strategies](#) for teaching English Language Learners based on that guide's recommendations.

Today, we'll take a look at how to incorporate vocabulary instruction into activities that support listening, speaking, and writing practice for English Language Learners. This is the final week I will focus on the guide's **first recommendation**: *Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities.*

Using the Lee & Low informational text, [Drumbeat in Our Feet](#), as my model text, I applied the guide's recommendations on how to choose an appropriate text and words for English Language Learners and how to teach the vocabulary over several days. See how I chose these words [here](#) and taught their meanings [here](#).

Using [Drumbeat in Our Feet](#) and the [IES's process](#), my target words are *origins*, *vital*, *ethnically*, *diverse*, *unique*, *vibrant* and *varied* from the "Origins of African Dance" excerpt.



1. IES: *Facilitate structured discussions to increase opportunities for students to talk about academic words.*

Always anchor these discussions around the topics that are present in the text and that do not have a clear-cut right or wrong answer. The goal is for students to learn to articulate a position or point of view and learn to defend their perspective or analysis. (P. 20)

Lee & Low: Over the course of multiple days, I am teaching a different part to each word's meaning. After doing so, I want to create open-ended questions for whole or small group discussion that will allow my students to practice using the target words.

As my target words are *origins*, *vital*, *ethnically*, *diverse*, *unique*, *vibrant* and *varied* from the "Origins of African Dance" excerpt in *Drumbeat In Our Feet*, I would use these throughout the week for peer-to-peer discussion. This looks like:

- Why would the authors want to discuss the *diverse* land and countries of Africa in a book about African dance?
- Why might African dance *vary* in form?
- Why should we study the *origins* of African dance today?
- What factors might contribute to the *diversity* in African dance?

2. *IES*: Require students to use target words in their writing activities. (P. 21)

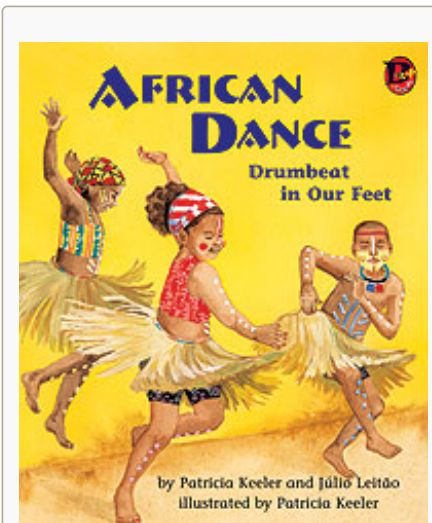
Lee & Low: Use the prompts above or focus on vocabulary-specific prompts. This looks like:

- What are the *origins* of your family?
- Write about the *origins* of a superhero.
- Create a story about the *origins* of the universe or how life began.
- Is it important to you to feel *unique*? Why or why not?
- What are at least two things *vital* to all life forms?

Although we cannot explicitly teach all academic and content-specific words our students will need to know in their educations and careers, we can be strategic in how we teach 5-8 words a week so they can apply these word strategies to new words they come across on their own.

Further reading on supporting English Language Learners in the classroom:

- [Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners in Elementary and Middle School—Part 1](#)
- [Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners—Part 2: Choosing a Text and Vocabulary Words](#)
- [Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners—Part 3: Teaching Vocabulary in Layers](#)
- Similar text to use with grades K-2 is [African Dance: Drumbeat in Our Feet](#)
- ¡Colorín Colorado! resources on [Academic Language for English Language Learners](#)
- *Drumbeat in Our Feet* also has a [BookTalk with creators Patricia Keeler and Julio Leitão](#)



African Dance: Drumbeat in Our Feet