AAAL (American Association for Applied Linguistics): a professional organization of scholars who are interested in and actively contribute to the multi-disciplinary field of applied linguistics.

Adapted: modified; usually refers to authentic materials that have been simplified for lower-level students.


Aural: Pertaining to the ear.

Aural Comprehension: understanding the spoken word.

Aural Discrimination: distinguishing between spoken sounds, words, or phrases.

Authentic Materials: actual materials from the real world, such as newspaper articles, pamphlets, radio broadcasts, and student writing.

Background Knowledge: existing knowledge that the language learner already has. In the second language comprehension process, at least three types of background are potentially activated: (1) linguistic information, (2) knowledge of the world (one’s store of concepts and experiences), and (3) knowledge of discourse structures or how various types of authentic discourse (conversations, radio broadcasts, newspaper articles, political speeches) are generally organized.

Bottom-Up Mode (of Language Processing): the processing of language information is worked by the incoming language itself in this mode; the “understanding” of incoming language proceeds from sounds or letters to words, grammatical relationships and logical meaning, etc. The composite meaning of the “message” is arrived at based on the incoming language data (see more at Skills-Based; compare to Top-Down Mode).

CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach): an approach that capitalized on the knowledge and skills that learners already possess, while encouraging them to develop new and more effective strategies for learning (developed by Chamot and O’Malley).
**CASAS:** Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System; a list of life-skill competencies.

**Chunking:** putting small groups of words together into meaningful phrases.

**Cloze Procedure:** a reading or listening comprehension test technique that eliminates every n-th word (usually fifth) in a passage. Students then fill in blanks with the appropriate word.

**Collocation:** the way words combine with other words in predictable ways. Pre-fabricated chunks of words.

**Communicative Competence:** the ability to recognize and produce language correctly, idiomatically, fluently, and appropriately in a variety of communicative settings. The term includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence, both orally and in writing.

**Competencies:** survival skills, the minimum amount of language necessary to get by in society.

**Content-based:** using subject matter, such as topics, themes, course materials (math, science, social studies) as a basis for second language teaching.

**Contextualized:** sounds, vocabulary, and grammar presented within a meaningful context to facilitate learning.

**Cooperative Learning:** learning that takes place when students of various abilities and backgrounds are placed together in pairs and small groups to work on tasks with instructor supervision and support. The instructor assesses the group’s work, not the individuals’.

**Core Series:** a text book or text series which make up the main, or core, curriculum. The text usually integrates the four skills plus grammar, and is used instead of individual skills texts.

**Corpus Linguistics:** shows how meaning is created and how it can be changed by members of the discourse community. Meaning isn't stable. Every new contribution to the discourse can bring about change.

**Critical Comprehension:** usually refers to reading to determine opinions, intent, bias, propaganda techniques, and language features and forms.

**Cross-Cultural:** materials or activities that present the cultures of the learners’ native languages and that of the target language.
**Cross-Curricular**: materials that include subject matter from various disciplines, such as sociology, business, economics, etc.

**Cross-Genre**: materials taken from a variety of sources, such as prose, poetry, newspapers, and technical reports.

**Deductive**: usually referring to grammar approaches where the grammatical rules are made explicit through teacher-directed instruction and then the students continue with practice of these rules.

**Direct Method**: based on the way children learn their native language: through direct association of words and phrases with objects and actions, without the use of native language as the intervening variable.

**Discourse Types**: the four basic modes of writing: description, narration, argumentation/persuasion, and exposition (see [Expository Writing](#)).

**Distance Learning**: an educational approach that uses various channels, such as online services, video, telephone, mail, etc., to instruct learners at libraries, community centers, home, or other locations outside of the traditional classroom setting.

**Dual Language Immersion**: see [Two Way Immersion](#)

**Dyads**: groups of two.

**EAP** (English for Academic Purposes): English language learning in preparation for academic study, usually focusing on advanced reading, technical writing, and comprehending college lectures.

**EFF (Equipped for the Future)**: the National Institute for Literacy's standards based system reform initiative aimed at improving the quality and outcomes of the adult literacy and lifelong learning delivery system. EFF starts from the recognition that the skills adults need as parents, workers, and citizens go beyond the basic academic skills that have traditionally been targeted by adult education programs.

**EFL (English as a Foreign Language)**: English language learning learned in a non-English-speaking environment.

**ELA (English Language Arts)**: K–12 national language arts standards for both native and non-native speakers of English.

**ELD (English Language Development)**: students learning English.

**ELL (English Language Learner)**: students learning English.

**ELT (English Language Teaching)**: the preferred global term for ESL.
**ESL (English as a Second Language):** English language learned in an English-speaking environment.

**ESOL (English to Speakers of Other Languages):** the preferred name for ESL in the adult and El-High sectors and in some U.S. states.

**ESP (English for Special Purposes):** includes EAP, EST, VESL, and English for Business and Economics.

**EST:** English for Science and Technology.

**Experiential Learning:** learning derived from activities that are somewhat natural; activities where both the left (analytical) and the right (holistic) sides of the brain are engaged; where content is contextualized, skills integrated, and purposes real. It also refers to how one applies generalizations from a concrete experience to new situations, and to a route to social and moral development. Thus it is a “messy” model of second language acquisition involving reciprocal development of cognition, socialization, and language.

**Expository Writing:** writing that tries to explain something in the form of one or more of the rhetorical patterns of fact, process, classification, comparison/contrast, analysis, illustration, cause and effect, definition, and analogy (see Discourse Types).

**Extensive Reading:** reading on one’s own; reading for diverse or general meaning; the bulk of the reading that native speakers do in everyday reading. Activities include skimming, scanning, pre-reading, and evaluation.

**False Beginners:** a low-level language learner who has previously studied the language but failed to achieve full mastery for that level. When applied to materials, it implies the use of a faster pace in earlier texts, and the inclusion of a quick review of concepts and language previously learned.

**Form:** the structural components of linguistic items, i.e., the syntax (i.e., word order) and morphology (i.e. verb endings).

**Functional/Notional Syllabus:** the functional approach emphasizes categories from discourse analysis, such defining, explaining, apologizing, inviting, etc. The notional approach organizes the syllabus around conceptual categories and notions, such as dimensions and measurement.

**Generation 1.5:** students, often children of immigrants, who have strong, often native-like English speaking skills but whose writing and academic skills are weaker and reflect those of an ESL student.
Grammaring: the ability to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately. This term, coined by Diane Larsen-Freeman, refers to the need to teach a “fifth” skill so that students can master not only the form of grammatical structures, but their meaning and their use as well.

Guided Writing: writing that serves to reinforce language principles and is controlled in order to reduce the possibility of error.

Holistic: concerned with interacting wholes, or complete systems, rather than with the treatment of parts.

Inductive: a teaching approach where examples are given and the students derive the rule from practice.

Inferential/Interpretive Questions: questions that go beyond the literal meaning and decoding process.

Integrated: involving a combination of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing as well as grammar.

Integrated Model of Language Teaching: an instructional model that includes many kinds of instructional integration as well as integration of recent educational research, theory, and practice from first and second oral language acquisition literature, and first and second language literacy development literature.

Integrated Series: a series that includes all four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, and often a grammar scope and sequence.

Intensive Reading: reading for detailed meaning; reading word for word followed by comprehension and discussion questions. It often involves intensive evaluation of the structure and vocabulary of the text.

Interactive Activities: activities in which students are involved in pair or small-group work in a collaborative atmosphere with the teacher.

Interactive Reading/Listening: when readers interact with what they are reading or listening to and bring their own knowledge to the reading (see Schema Theory).

Learner-Centered: using information from learners and about learners as the basis for developing teaching materials, strategies, and techniques.

Learning Strategies: specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques – such as seeking out conversation partners or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task – used by students to enhance their own learning.
Learning Styles: general approaches that students use to learn a new language and many other subjects. The spectrum of styles are analytic-global aspect, sensory preferences, intuition vs. sensory/sequential learning, orientation toward closure or openness.

LEP: (Limited English Proficiency) the term (usually used in elementary and secondary education) for students identified as needing ESL training (see also PEP).

Lexical Approach: an approach to language learning set forth by Michael Lewis. The principles of The Lexical Approach include (i) the grammar/vocabulary dichotomy is invalid, (ii) collocation is used as an organizing principle, (iii) successful language is a wider concept than accurate language, (iv) the Observe-Hypothesize-Experiment cycle replaces the Present-Practice-produce paradigm, and (v) language consists of grammaticalized lexis - not lexicalized grammar.

Literacy: the ability to read, write, and compute well enough to function in a community or on a job.

Literal Comprehension Questions: information questions, or “display” questions, which answer what, when, where, who, how many, etc.

Meaning: the signification or semantics, both lexical (i.e., the dictionary definition of a word) and grammatical (e.g., a conditional signals a cause and effect).

Metacognition: learning to learn; thinking about the learning process.

Minimal Pair: a pair of sound clusters (hit/heat or nice/rice) used to practice sound discrimination.

Open Enrollment (Open-Entry): a situation usually in Adult Education ESL programs where students are allowed to enroll in the class at any point in the semester.

Pair Work: work done by students in groups of two without the direct supervision of the teacher.

Peer Editing/Peer Evaluation: feedback given to the language learner by fellow students.

PEP (Potential English Proficiency): the alternative term for LEP.

Problem-Posing Approach: developed by Paolo Freire; instruction that aims for self-understanding at a personal and community level deeper than in Values Clarification Approaches.

Process Approach: a way of teaching writing as a process of searching for and developing ideas, getting feedback from peers, drafting, revising, editing, and completing
the final product and reflecting on the learning experience. The focus is on the process, part of which is the written product.

**Product (Model) Approach:** a traditional way of teaching writing that provides students with examples of good writing that they attempt to duplicate. The focus is on the written product.

**Realia:** real objects or picture of them, such as money, maps, menus, want ads, clothing, food, and so on.

**Register:** the term for distinguishing between formal and informal speech.

**Retelling:** an activity where students summarize and retell a story or conversation; one of the best ways to test comprehension.

**Rhetorical Patterns:** see [Expository Writing](#).

**Scanning:** quickly searching a text for some particular piece of information.

**Schema Theory:** readers interact with what they are reading, bringing their experiences to bear on it. The more students’ personal experience or knowledge (extant linguistic knowledge) can be used, the more easily they will read. Calling on this knowledge is referred to as activating the student’s schema.

**Scope and Sequence:** the amount and order of presentation of language forms that comprise a curriculum or course of study.

**Semantic Fields:** associative networks of words; groups of words that have related meaning or function.

**Situations:** specific places where survival language is spoken; for example, at school, at the post office, in the doctor’s office.

**Skills-Based:** focuses on pieces of language, building from the smallest units of language (for example, sounds to words and phrases) or breaking down the larger segments of language into individual units.

**Skimming:** quickly running one’s eyes over a text to get its gist.

**Spiraling:** reusing or recycling vocabulary, grammar, or concepts throughout a text.

**Strategy-Based:** a focus on the strategies needed to improve learning. When applied to reading, it is a whole-language model that views reading as a successful integration of conceptual abilities, background knowledge, and processing strategies. Reading, writing, and oral language are components of a mutually supporting communication system, and should therefore be presented together.
Structure: grammar.

Survival Skills: linguistic, cultural, and practical information that people need to get along in everyday life.

Survival Writing: nonacademic, everyday writing, such as filling out forms and writing memos and notes.

Task: a self-contained unit of work focused on meaning rather than form.

Task-Based: materials or curricula incorporating pieces of classroom work that involve learners in comprehending, manipulating, producing or interacting in the target language, while their attention is principally focused on meaning rather than form.

Task Chain: an integrated sequence of tasks in which the successful completion of one task is dependent on the successful completion of the task before.

TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language): the M.A. degree that prepares teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages.

TESOL (Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages): the international organization for professionals in the field of ESL.

Thematic: grouping according to common themes.

TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language): the prerequisite standardized test for admission into U.S. colleges and universities by non-native speakers of English.

Top-Down Mode (of Language Processing): the processing of language information comes from prior knowledge that allows learners to predict on the basis of context what the incoming “message” can be expected to be, and how the “pieces” fit into the whole. Top-down processing involves prediction and inference on the basis of hierarchies of facts, propositions, and expectations, and it enables the listener or reader to bypass some aspects of bottom-up processing (see Schema Theory; compare Bottom-Up mode).

Topics of General Interest: stories or topics taken from a wide spectrum of issues, usually U.S. based.

Topics of Global Interest: stories or topics taken from both U.S. and international issues.

TPR (Total Physical Response): a teaching method that focuses on listening comprehension, utilizing direct commands, and physical responses to such commands.

Tryads: groups of three.
**Two Way Immersion**: a program which serves both language minority and majority students in the same classroom. These programs use each group of students’ first language for academic instruction at certain points during the program. They aim for bilingualism and biculturalism for both groups of students.

**Unabridged**: a complete piece of work; not based on a larger piece.

**Unadapted**: not modified or simplified, usually referring to reading or listening materials.

**Unscripted**: refers to lectures delivered without notes.

**Use**: the pragmatic constraints governing the use of a particular form in context (e.g., its politeness level).

**Values Clarification Approach**: instruction in which the topic is the self in relation to other persons, states, and events; one that promotes self-understanding and self-realization.

**VESL (Vocational ESL)**: ESL for the workplace.

**Whole Language**: refers to literacy training. It is based on the following eight principles:

1. Learning in the classroom and out of the classroom are not different
2. Language learning is a social event – classrooms have a workshop atmosphere where learners interact and share
3. The emphasis is on process; classrooms are organized to support individual growth
4. Language is the means of creating and communicating new knowledge
5. The four language processes (listening, speaking, reading, writing) are interrelated and interdependent
6. Authentic reading materials provide the best models for language
7. The purpose of language is to create meaning
8. Learners must be involved in real language activities.