

# Review of *Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals*

Kristine Kelly, ABE Teaching & Learning Advancement System (ATLAS), Hamline University

*Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals* is focused on what the co-authors, Tan Huynh and Beth Skelton, call “long-term multilingual learners.” These learners have developed proficient or near-proficient English for social purposes but lack the academic language structures to demonstrate precise content learning in school. These students typically have not attained proficiency in academic English language within 5 years of being labeled as an English language learner. The authors remind the reader of the many assets multilingual students bring to the classroom, while providing a wealth of concrete examples to build academic language for thinking, speaking, and writing about content-area concepts in ways that keep the heavy lifting on the learners. Though the target audience of this book is high school teachers of long-term multilingual learners, the instructional framework presented and extensive examples of instructional scaffolds are relevant for adult basic education in the age of college and career readiness. The framework and accompanying scaffold examples are especially helpful for teachers working with adult learners in high school equivalency (HSE) classrooms or preparing adult learners for postsecondary options.

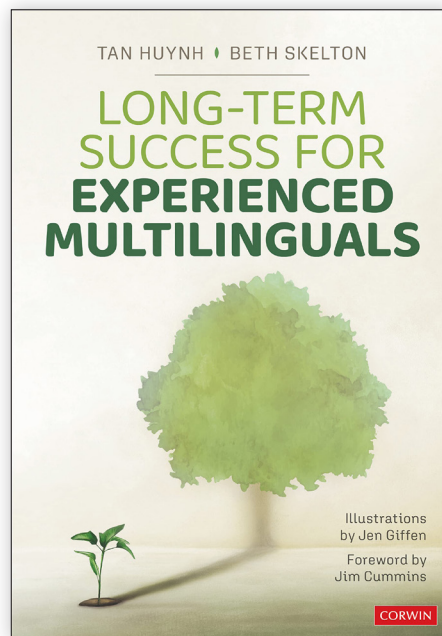
When multilingual learners advance from primarily

English language instruction into more content-focused instruction, there may be an assumption that these students already have the skills and language needed to process and demonstrate knowledge of content-area concepts. On the other hand—and equally problematic—

teachers may hold these learners to lower expectations or support them in ways that do not build capacity for academic independence. Huynh and Skelton highlight the importance of scaffolding these students. By doing so, they address the misconception that scaffolding reduces rigor by articulating that intentionally designed scaffolds help all learners to present and explain their thinking and understanding productively. Providing scaffolding in the typical adult basic education classroom reflects the Universal Design for Learning approach, a design that stresses equity for all. Many adult learners, even those who have grown up speaking

English, could benefit from the type of academic language support proposed in this book.

Huynh and Skelton advocate that “[a]chievement occurs by design, not by accident” (p. 89) and provide evidence of the successful outcomes of intentional scaffolding through the experiences of seven teachers from different content areas. The authors include some familiar scaffolding strategies, like activating background



■ Huynh, T., & Skelton, B. (2023). *Long-Term Success for Experienced Multilinguals*. Corwin. 264 pages. \$39.95 (paperback). ISBN: 9781071891278

knowledge and providing sentence starters for writing and speaking, but the authors also introduce fresh ideas. For example, rather than remove or replace difficult vocabulary, teachers can add an easier synonym behind the original word or phrase. If students need support to organize spoken and written responses about content, teachers can categorize word banks into nouns and verbs for greater accuracy of use.

To develop a clear understanding of where these intentional scaffolds can best serve learners, Huynh and Skelton lay out an instructional framework chapter by chapter that reflects a backward design approach: determine what learning students must demonstrate about content through a summative task, and then carefully plan lessons that build the skills and language learners need to complete the summative task successfully. Several subsequent steps of the instructional framework help guide teachers through identifying pertinent knowledge skills and academic language, making the content accessible to learners, and providing structures that help learners demonstrate their thinking and understanding with accuracy and precision. The reader may have an impulse to single out specific scaffolds presented with each step, but in following the steps sequentially and the framework in its entirety, there is a greater likelihood of cohesive instruction.

While scaffolding learners, the authors assert that having an asset-based mindset for long-term multilingual learners combined with a specific approach to designing content-area instruction will result in a shift toward higher cognitive expectations, learner engagement with more complex texts, and increased practice with academic language structures when writing and speaking about content. Reversing any teacher deficit mindset reduces the likelihood of over-scaffolding instruction, such as providing mainly rote memorization tasks or simplified—rather than authentic—texts for learning. Consequently, learners can successfully engage with content at levels appropriate to their academic goals and employ higher levels of thinking.

In an effort to show how their framework and accompanying scaffolds work in real-life instruction, Huynh and Skelton weave the stories of two students throughout the book as they engage with content instruction developed around their framework. Also included are field experience reflections by both the authors and other teachers who discuss the effects of

incorporating the framework into their instructional planning and collaboration with colleagues. Key points are summarized visually with easy-to-follow examples and templates. Huynh and Skelton integrate stopping points for the reader to try out each strategy and reflect on how the content of each chapter connects with current teaching practices, making the book a possible core resource for a community of practice or teacher team to use for professional development. For example, each stopping point is an opportunity for adult basic education teachers to discuss how the book's content is applicable to preparing adult learners for HSE testing or post-secondary transitions. Although the authors' suggestion of adopting this planning process schoolwide in the final chapter may be a stretch for most adult basic education programs, there is clearly value in collaboration among expert English language teachers and content-area teachers for the benefit of HSE learners.

Over 25 years of teaching HSE learners in adult basic education, I saw a large influx of multilingual learners who required more purposeful academic English support than I was trained to provide. This text and its meaningful framework, clear rationale and concrete examples, and useful templates for planning would have filled in a lot of my and my learners' gaps. Huynh and Skelton suggest that though all teachers do not have to be English language experts, content teachers do have a responsibility to ensure that learners are able to have access to the content they are teaching and to develop the skills needed to demonstrate content knowledge in ways that mirror authentic academic purposes and structures. It is not enough to teach the surface of content; we must be able to identify academic language demands early on in our content and accompanying tasks and target those language demands deliberately and thoughtfully for depth.

With often little time to plan instruction, intermittent learner attendance, and a sense of urgency to cover as much content as possible for HSE learners, the idea of implementing any sort of instructional planning framework or taking time to embed intentional scaffolds into every stage of instruction may seem overwhelming and unreachable. However, Huynh and Skelton's book is a reminder to slow down and be intentional in how we teach adult learners in the HSE and college preparation classroom for maximum learner success.