Teacher's Resource Guide of
Language Transfer Issues
for English Language Learners

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Understanding Language Transfer

Students learning English come to us with myriad backgrounds, both culturally and linguistically. These backgrounds serve as marvelous resources for learning another language. For instance, all spoken languages are made up of sounds that comprise words that comprise sentences that comprise communication. We use the wealth of knowledge provided to us by our first language as a roadmap for interpreting all aspects of a second language—grammar (syntax), phonics (sounds and writing symbols), and vocabulary. This knowledge is an asset and a valuable tool in accelerating the acquisition of a second language. Just think how much harder language learning would be if a learner didn't know to look for words among the endless string of babble!

Because English language learners rely on their primary language experiences to guide their acquisition of English, transfer issues—language learning areas in which the primary language influences English production—arise. There are three types of transfer between languages.

The first is positive transfer. Cognates are an excellent example of positive transfer. If a student speaks Spanish and knows the word *teléfono*, he or she will have little trouble learning the word *telephone* in English. The two words sound similar and even have a similar spelling to a certain extent. The transfer from Spanish to English, in this case, has a positive effect. Another example of positive transfer can occur in the realm of phonics. If a student speaks Spanish and has learned that the letter *m* represents /m/, that knowledge will transfer readily to English phonics, in which the letter represents the same sound.

The second type of language transfer is zero transfer. Zero transfer occurs when something is encountered in English that is not present in the primary language. For some languages, such as Chinese, the writing system of English is a zero transfer situation. Because these languages rely on different writing systems, a student from one of these language backgrounds will not mistake the letter *j* for another sound because he or she has never encountered that writing symbol in the primary language. In a sense, the slate is clean, and while there is no assistance from the primary language as in positive transfer, there is no impediment either.

The last type of language transfer is negative transfer. In these situations, an element of the primary language conflicts
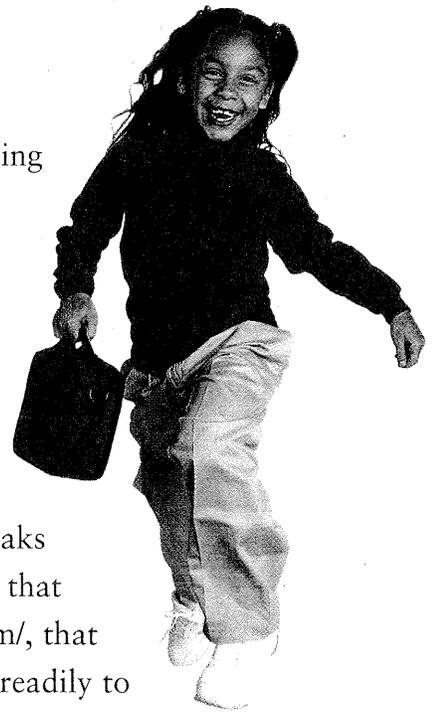
with an element of English and causes difficulty in acquiring that specific element of English. A simple example is that Spanish speakers who know the word *librería* might be tempted to use their knowledge to interpret the English word *library* as a bookstore instead of as an institution that lends books to the public. In the realm of grammar, that same Spanish speaker might be tempted to place an adjective after the noun *(house big* as in *casa grande)* when constructing English sentences. And when he or she encounters the letter *j* while learning to read, the reader with Spanish language background might substitute /h/ for the English *j* sound because that is the Spanish letter-sound correspondence.

Because each primary language has unique characteristics, there are unique language transfer issues for all of the languages represented in our classrooms. This resource guide focuses on providing teachers valuable information about zero and negative language transfer issues that affect the English acquisition of our students. As part of this introduction, background information for the ten languages highlighted in this guide is provided. The first chart that follows provides grammar transfer issues for the top ten primary languages found among English language learners in U.S. schools. The second chart provides phonics transfer issues for the top seven primary languages. A final section highlights word study transfer issues for five languages.

Teachers should use this wealth of information to help them identify possible areas of difficulty for students in their classrooms during instruction and to modify expectations accordingly. For instance, when teaching third-person agreement to Vietnamese students, it's helpful to know that the group may not be able to produce a final *s* sound. Therefore, while they might be able to listen to and absorb the grammar lesson passively, the teacher should be aware that Vietnamese speakers may have difficulty producing the sentence *That hurts me* with accurate third-person agreement.

The phonics transfer chart is divided into two sections: sound transfer (phonology) and sound-symbol transfer (phonics). Acquiring the sound-symbol system of English phonics relies on two elements for an English language learner—first, the learner's ability to produce the English sound accurately and second, his or her ability to associate the sound produced with the correct symbol. Therefore, both the sound system and the writing system of the primary language can impact a student's English language acquisition. The sound-symbol correspondence chart includes only those languages that use the Roman alphabet because other languages have zero transfer for the entire English writing system.

Best instructional practice proceeds from the known to the unknown. Therefore, with a group of language learners with

a single language background, elements of positive transfer are taught first, followed by zero transfer elements, and finally by negative transfer elements. This understanding is the organizing principle behind the language-specific alternate scopes and sequences for phonics and word study found in the *Rigby On Our Way to English* program.

When encountering an element of negative transfer in a young learner's ability to produce the sounds of English, teachers often find that overt correction can raise children's anxiety, resulting in an overall negative effect for language learning. Because children who learn a second language before the age of 12 will generally acquire the sound system perfectly over time, spending instructional time on pronunciation is not necessary. Rather, modeling correct pronunciation back to students while validating their English approximations is the best course to follow.

It can also be beneficial to use knowledge about negative transfer issues to inform an instructional approach to a specific language element. For instance, when teaching the letters *b* and *v* to Spanish-speaking students (these two sounds are variants of a single phoneme, or distinctive sound, in Spanish), an approach that contrasts the English sounds and symbols of these two letters will probably yield the best results. Similarly, raising the awareness of intermediate language learners to the cause of their errors can
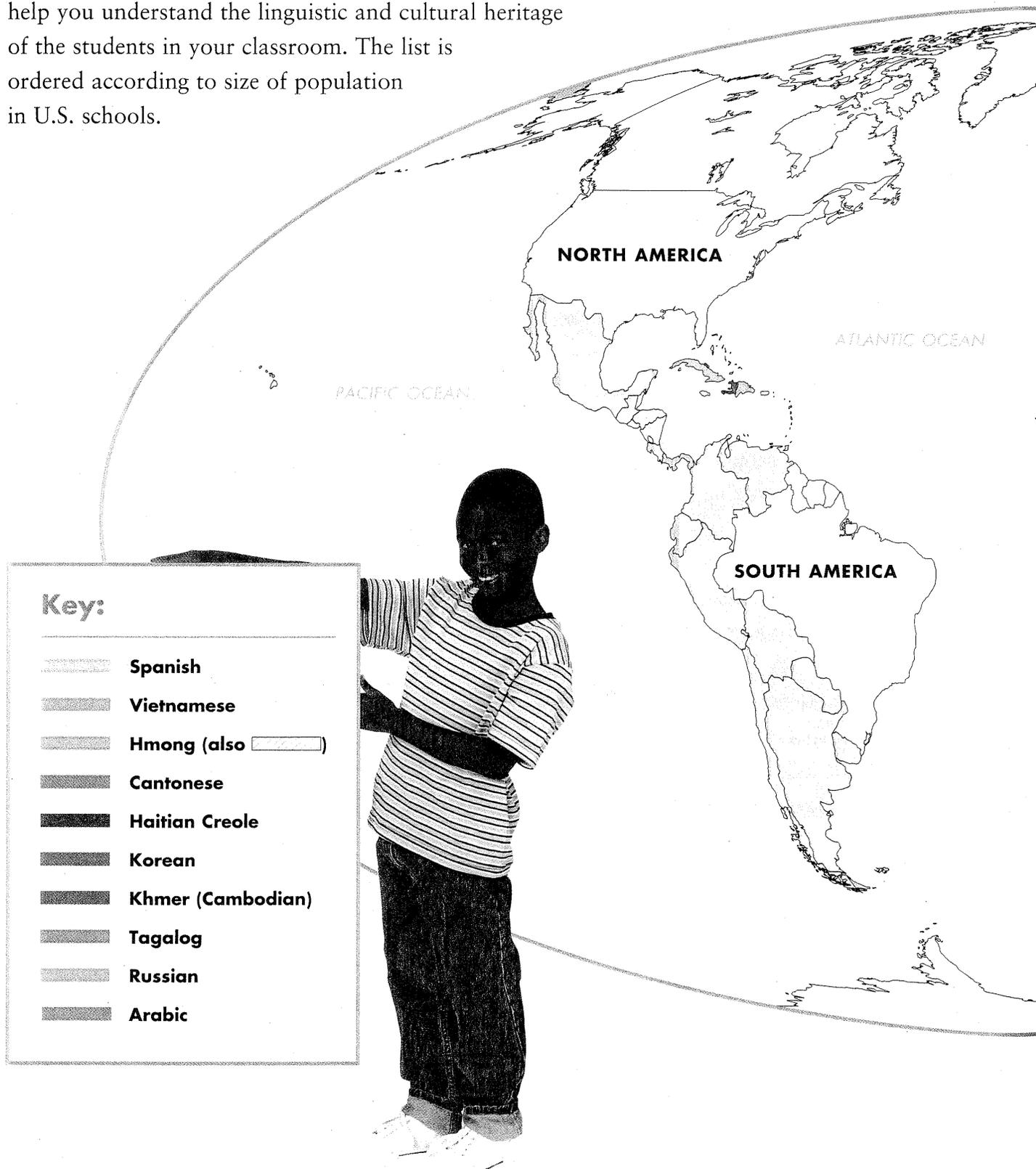
help them learn to self-correct. *Lupita, I see that you wrote "country large" in this assignment. I know that's how you say it in Spanish, but we always say* large country *in English. Next time you write a paper, maybe you can proofread for that type of mistake.* Metacognitive language learning strategies, those in which students are actively engaged in analyzing and improving their learning process, can accelerate language learning.

Good instruction is anchored in a well-rounded knowledge of students and their learning needs. Because teachers of English language learners cannot possibly speak all the primary languages that represent the backgrounds of each of their students, we have brought together expert language consultants for the largest primary language groups in the United States today in order to provide important information that can inform classroom instruction.

Background Information for Ten Primary Languages

The following background information is provided to help you understand the linguistic and cultural heritage of the students in your classroom. The list is ordered according to size of population in U.S. schools.

Key:

- Spanish
- Vietnamese
- Hmong (also [____])
- Cantonese
- Haitian Creole
- Korean
- Khmer (Cambodian)
- Tagalog
- Russian
- Arabic

NORTH AMERICA

SOUTH AMERICA

PACIFIC OCEAN

ATLANTIC OCEAN

ARCTIC OCEAN

EUROPE

ASIA

PACIFIC OCEAN

AFRICA

INDIAN OCEAN

AUSTRALIA

ANTARCTICA

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Spanish

The largest group of English language learners in the United States is comprised of Spanish-speaking students whose families have come from Mexico, Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. Immigrants come to the United States seeking economic opportunity, education, or refuge from political unrest. Spanish colonial conquest led to the dominance of Spanish as the official language in much of the Americas. Over 70 percent of Spanish-speaking immigrants come to the United States from Mexico. Other Spanish-speaking countries are Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, Uruguay, and Venezuela. This great diversity is reflected in the different regional variations of Spanish spoken by different groups. There can be several different words (lexical variants) to refer to the same thing or express the same action. However, Spanish speakers from different regions can still communicate with each other. Given that Spanish is a language derived from Latin and that English also contains many words of Latin origin, English and Spanish share many cognates with a common Latin root. These cognates are words with a common origin that have a similar meaning and spelling in both languages.

NORTH AMERICA

GREENLAND
ALASKA (U.S.)
CANADA
PACIFIC OCEAN
UNITED STATES
ATLANTIC OCEAN
MEXICO

CENTRAL AMERICA

MEXICO
BELIZE
JAMAICA
GUATEMALA
HONDURAS
Caribbean Sea
EL SALVADOR
NICARAGUA
PANAMA
COSTA RICA
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN

THE CARIBBEAN

BAHAMAS
NORTH ATLANTIC OCEAN
CUBA
DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
JAMAICA
HAITI
PUERTO RICO
Caribbean Sea
LESSER ANTILLES

ATLANTIC OCEAN
FRANCE
SPAIN
PORTUGAL
Mediterranean Sea
MOROCCO
ALGERIA

SOUTH AMERICA

VENEZUELA
GUYANA
SURINAME
FRENCH GUIANA
COLOMBIA
ECUADOR
BRAZIL
PERU
BOLIVIA
PARAGUAY
CHILE
ATLANTIC OCEAN
PACIFIC OCEAN
URUGUAY
ARGENTINA

Vietnamese

Vietnamese is one of approximately 150 languages belonging to the Austro-Asiatic family of languages. It is spoken in Vietnam, on the eastern portion of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula in Southeast Asia. The official language of Vietnam, Vietnamese, is a tonal language made up of six distinct tones. Vietnamese is written with the Roman alphabet and the use of diacritical markings to depict tones. Many Vietnamese speakers immigrated to the United States in 1975 after the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of North and South Vietnam, and, most recently, from 1985 to 1991 through family reunification programs.
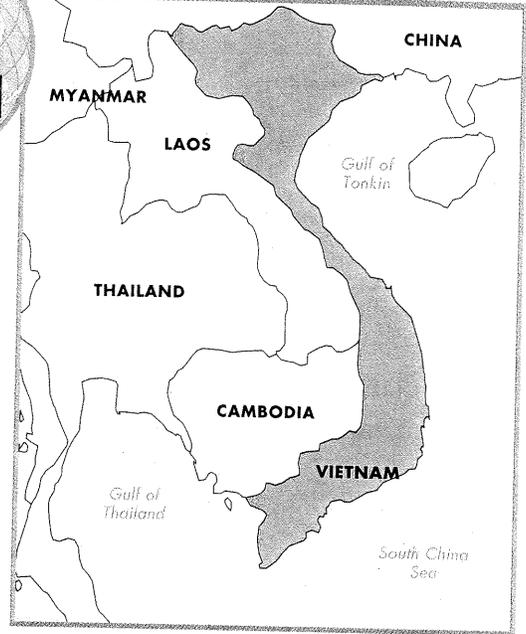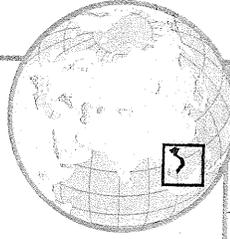
Hmong

The Hmong language is one of a group of closely related languages of Southeast Asia and Southern China often referred to as the Miao-Yao languages. It is the tonal language of an ethnic group called Hmong that is spread among several countries: China, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam. Hmong is predominantly monosyllabic. It is made up of eight different tones, and each syllable has a particular tone associated with it. Many Hmong speakers immigrated to the United States in 1975 as refugees after the Vietnam War. Today Hmong people can be found in China, Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam as well as the United States, France, French Guiana, Argentina, Canada, Germany, and Australia.
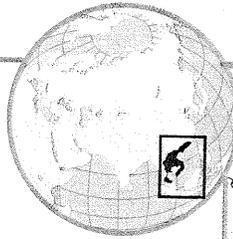
Cantonese

Cantonese is a tonal language belonging to the Sino Tibetan language family. It is one of the major dialects of Chinese spoken in both the Zhujiang delta, in South China's Guangdong Province, and in Hong Kong. Other major dialects of Chinese include Mandarin, Hakka, Wu, and Min. Although these Chinese dialects share a common writing system, speakers of the various dialects cannot necessarily understand one another. Chinese is traditionally written top to bottom rather than left to right, and text starts from what we usually consider the back of a book. Mandarin, the official language of the People's Republic of China, is used in education in Guangdong rather than Cantonese. An influx of Cantonese speakers came into the United States after World War II and again in the late 1960s after the passage of the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. A further impetus occurred in the 1970s, when the United States offered educational opportunities to Chinese immigrants.

Haitian Creole

An official language of Haiti and the sole language of much of the population of Haiti, Haitian Creole is a language that developed out of contact between the French colonists and West African languages of the plantation workers. As a result, it contains elements of all of these languages. While much of its vocabulary is similar to French, other elements of the language, such as grammar, differ dramatically. Since 1940 three different writing systems, all based on the Roman alphabet, have been introduced for the language, resulting in widespread use of hybrid elements of each of these systems despite the Haitian government's adoption of a standard writing system in 1979. Speakers of Haitian Creole come to the United States seeking economic opportunity. Between 1981 and 1996, almost one million people left Haiti.
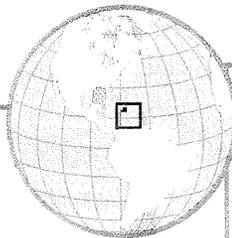
Korean

Korean is a non-tonal Asian language spoken in the Korean Peninsula in Northeast Asia. There are seven Korean dialects: Ham-Kyung, Pyung-Yang, Choong-Chung, Kyung-Sang, Chul-La, Che-Joo, and Central, which is spoken in Seoul and Kyung-Gui. Korean speakers can be found in both North and South Korea, China, Japan, and Russia. Many immigrated to the United States after the liberation of Korea from Japanese colonization in 1945 and again after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act. Koreans continue to immigrate to the United States seeking a higher standard of living, better educational opportunities, and political stability.
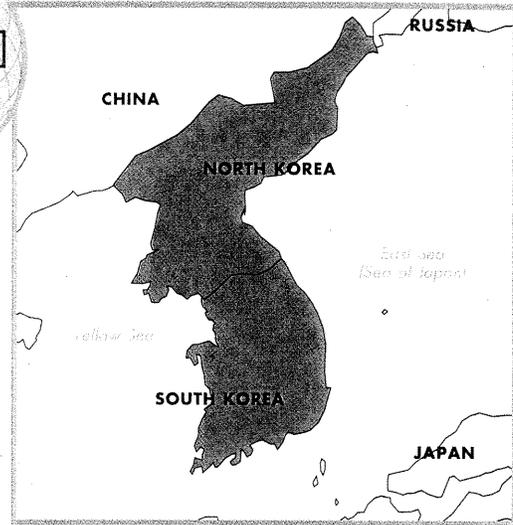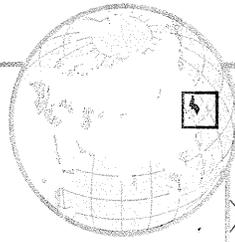
Khmer (Cambodian)

The word Khmer (pronounced kuh-MIE, rhymes with *pie*) refers to both the national language and the people of Cambodia, located in Southeast Asia. Khmer, a non-tonal language, is spoken by 90 percent of the population in Cambodia and also by many people in northeast Thailand and southern Vietnam. Cambodian Americans arrived in the United States in two waves. The first wave consisted of a small number who escaped Cambodia just before the Khmer Rouge takeover in 1975. The second wave consisted of a much larger number of refugees who fled the country after the 1979 invasion of Cambodia by Vietnam, ending the reign of the Khmer Rouge. Between 1975 and 1987, over 140,000 Cambodian refugees resettled in the United States. Refugee resettlement came to an end in the late 1980s, but Cambodian immigrants continue to arrive as Cambodian Americans sponsor family members who had been left behind.
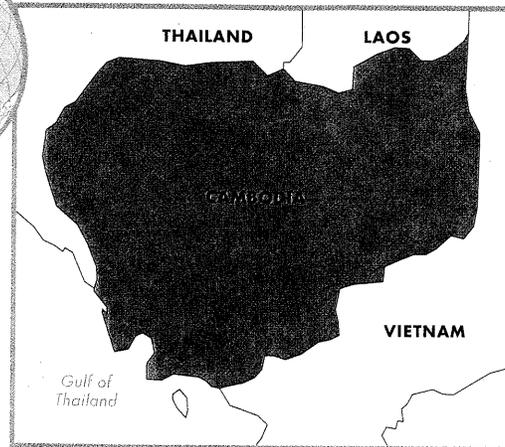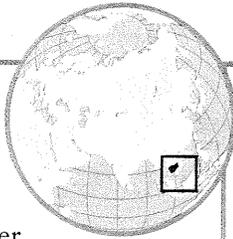
Tagalog

Tagalog (pronounced tah-GAH-lug) is one of over 300 languages that belong to the Malayo-Polynesian family of languages spoken in the Philippines, a set of islands off the southeast coast of mainland China. Tagalog (also called Filipino) and English have been the two official languages of the Philippines since 1973, while Tagalog remains the sole national language of the Philippines. There is a great diversity of languages in the Philippines. Some of the major languages other than Tagalog include Cebuano, Ilocano, Hiligaynon, Bicol, and Waray. Tagalog speakers immigrated to the United States mainly after 1946, when they achieved independence after being a U.S. territory for 46 years.
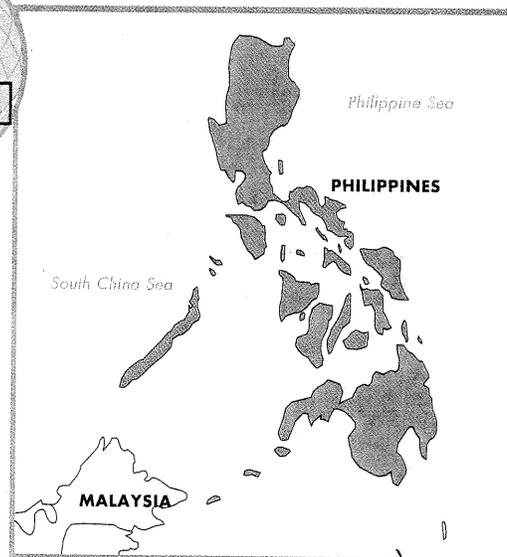
Russian

As a member of the Indo-European language family, the same language family as English, Russian shares some cognates with English. Cognates are words of similar meaning that sound similar between two languages. Russian is written in a left-to-right format, however, with the Cyrillic alphabet, not the Roman one. The first influx of Russian-speaking immigrants to the United States occurred during the first decades of the last century and consisted of those seeking religious and political freedom and an escape from war. A second wave of immigration to the United States from Russia occurred in the 1970s, when dissidents were exiled from the Soviet Union, many of them choosing the United States as their new country of residence. After the demise of the Soviet Union in the 1990s, more Russian immigrants have come to the United States seeking better economic opportunities and social stability.

Arabic

Arabic belongs to the Semitic language family. It is spoken in an area stretching from Morocco in the west to the Persian Gulf in the east. There are many varieties, including Classical Arabic, Eastern Arabic, Western Arabic, and Maltese, not all of which can be mutually understood. A Modern Standard Arabic also exists and is used in literature, education, and the media. Unlike most European languages, Arabic is written from right to left, and text starts from what we usually consider the back of a book. Its alphabet consists of 28 letters, mainly consonants, with vowels that are indicated by marks above or below the letters. Most speakers of Arabic immigrated to the United States from the nations of Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, Yemen, and Jordan. A large influx of Arabic speakers occurred after the passage of the 1965 Immigration and Naturalization Act.
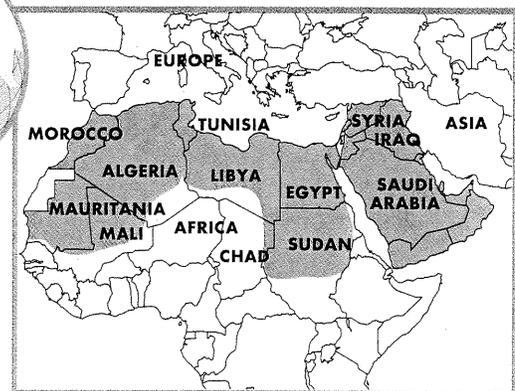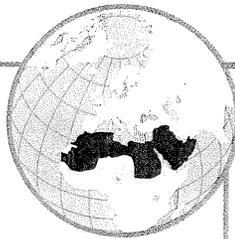
Grammar Transfer Issues for Ten Languages

The following chart identifies areas in which speakers of various primary languages may have some difficulty in acquiring English grammar (syntax). The type of transfer error and its cause is outlined for each grammatical category.

Nouns

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
Plural forms	omission of plural marker –s *I have 5 book.*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese	Nouns do not change form to show the plural in the primary language.
Possessive forms	avoidance of 's to describe possession *the children of my sister* instead of *my sister's children*	Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Spanish, Tagalog, Vietnamese	The use of a prepositional phrase to express possession reflects the only structure or a more common structure in the primary language.
	no marker for possessive forms *house my friend* instead of *my friend's house*	Haitian Creole, Khmer, Vietnamese	A noun's owner comes after the object in the primary language.
Count versus noncount nouns	use of plural forms for English noncount nouns *the furnitures, the color of her hairs*	Haitian Creole, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog	Nouns that are count and noncount differ between English and the primary language.

Articles

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	omission of article *He has job.* *His dream is to become lawyer, not teacher.*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese	Articles are either lacking or the distinction between *a* and *the* is not paralleled in the primary language.
	omission of articles in certain contexts, such as to identify a profession *He is teacher.*	Spanish	The article is not used in Spanish in this context, but it is needed in English.
	overuse of articles *The honesty is the best policy.* *This food is popular in the Japan.* *I like the cats.*	Arabic, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Spanish, Tagalog	The article is used in the primary language in places where it isn't used in English.
	use of *one* for *a/an* *He is one engineer.*	Haitian Creole, Hmong, Vietnamese	Learners sometimes confuse the articles *a/an* with *one* since articles either do not exist in the primary language or serve a different function.

Pronouns

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
Personal pronouns, gender	use of pronouns with inappropriate gender *He is my sister.*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog	The third person pronoun in the primary language is gender free. The same pronoun is used where English uses masculine, feminine, and neuter pronouns, resulting in confusion of pronoun forms in English.
	use of pronouns with inappropriate gender *He is my sister.*	Spanish	In Spanish, subject pronouns are dropped in everyday speech and the verb conveys third-person agreement, effectively collapsing the two pronouns and causing transfer difficulty for subject pronouns in English.
	use of inappropriate gender, particularly with neuter nouns *The house is big. She is beautiful.*	Russian, Spanish	Inanimate nouns have feminine and masculine gender in the primary language, and the gender may be carried over into English.
Personal pronoun forms	confusion of subject and object pronoun forms *Him hit me.* *I like she.* *Let we go.*	Cantonese, Hmong, Khmer	The same pronoun form is used for *he/him*, *she/her*, and in some primary languages for *I/me* and *we/us*.
	use of incorrect number for pronouns *I saw many yellow flowers. It was pretty.*	Cantonese, Korean	There is no number agreement in the primary language.
	omission of subject pronouns *Michael isn't here. Is in school.*	Korean, Russian, Spanish	Subject pronouns may be dropped in the primary language and the verb ending supplies information on number and/or gender.
	omission of object pronouns *That man is very rude, so nobody likes.*	Korean, Vietnamese	Direct objects are frequently dropped in the primary language.
	omission of pronouns in clauses *If not have jobs, they will not have food.*	Cantonese, Vietnamese	A subordinate clause at the beginning of a sentence does not require a subject in the primary language.
	use of pronouns with subject nouns *This car it runs very fast.* *Your friend he seems so nice.* *My parents they live in Vietnam.*	Hmong, Spanish, Vietnamese	This type of redundant structure reflects the popular "topic-comment" approach used in the primary language: The speaker mentions a topic and then makes a comment on it.

Pronouns *continued*

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	avoidance of pronouns by repetition of nouns *Sara visits her grandfather every Sunday, and Sara makes a meal.*	Korean, Vietnamese	It is common in the primary language to repeat nouns rather than to use pronouns.
Pronoun *one*	omission of the pronoun *one* *I saw two nice cars, and I like the small.*	Russian, Spanish, Tagalog	Adjectives can be used on their own in the primary language, whereas English often requires a noun or *one*.
Possessive forms	confusion of possessive forms *The book is my.*	Cantonese, Hmong, Vietnamese	Cantonese and Hmong speakers tend to omit final *n*, creating confusion between *my* and *mine*.

Adjectives

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	position of adjectives after nouns *I read a book interesting.*	Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Spanish, Vietnamese	Adjectives commonly come after nouns in the primary language.
	position of adjectives before certain pronouns *This is interesting something.*	Cantonese, Korean	Adjectives always come before words they modify in the primary language.
Comparison	omission of markers for comparison *She is smart than me.*	Khmer	Since there are no suffixes or inflections in Khmer, the tendency is to omit them in English.
	avoidance of *-er* and *-est* endings *I am more old than my brother.*	Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Spanish	Comparative and superlative are usually formed with separate words in the primary language, the equivalent of *more* and *most* in English.
Confusion of *-ing* and *-ed* forms	confusion of *-ing* and *-ed* forms *The movie was bored.* *I am very interesting in sports.*	Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Spanish	The adjective forms in the primary language that correspond to the ones in English do not have active and passive meanings. In Korean, for many adjectives, the same form is used for both active and passive meanings, such as *boring* versus *bored*.

Verbs

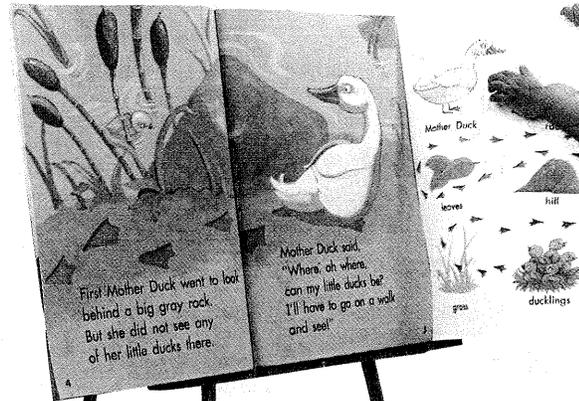| GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
Present tense	omission of *s* in present tense, third person agreement *She go to school every day.*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese	There is no subject-verb agreement in the primary language.
	problems with irregular subject-verb agreement *Sue and Ed has a new house.*	Cantonese, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog	Verbs forms do not change to indicate the number of the subject in the primary language.
Past tense	omission of tense markers *I study English yesterday.* *I give it to him yesterday.*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Tagalog, Vietnamese	Verbs in the primary language do not change form to express tense.
	confusion of present form and simple past of irregular verbs *I give it to him yesterday.*	Cantonese, Spanish	Speakers of the primary language have difficulty recognizing that merely a vowel shift in the middle of the verb, rather than a change in the ending of the verb, is sufficient to produce a change of tense in irregular verbs.
	incorrect use of present for the future *I come tomorrow.*	Cantonese, Korean	The primary language allows the use of present tense for the future.
In negative statements	omission of helping verbs in negative statements *I no understand.* *I not get into university.*	Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog	Helping verbs are not used in negative statements in the primary language.
Perfect tenses	avoidance of present perfect where it should be used *I live here for two years.*	Haitian Creole, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese	The verb form either doesn't exist in the primary language or has a different function.
	use of present perfect where past perfect should be used *Yesterday I have done that.*	Khmer, Korean	In the primary language a past marker, e.g., *yesterday*, is inserted to indicate a completed action and no other change is necessary. In English when a past marker is used, the verb form must change to past perfect instead of present perfect.
Past continuous	use of past continuous for recurring action in the past *When I was young,* *I was studying a lot.*	Korean, Spanish, Tagalog	In the primary language, the past continuous form can be used in contexts in which English uses the expression *used to* or the simple past.
Verb as a noun	omission of infinitive marker *to* *Criticize people is not good.*	Cantonese	Unlike English, Cantonese does not require an infinitive marker when using a verb as a noun.

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GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	Use of two or more main verbs in one clause without any connectors I <u>took</u> a book <u>studied</u> at the library.	Hmong	In Hmong verbs can be connected without *and* or any other conjunction (serial verbs).
Linking verbs	Omission of linking verb He *hungry*.	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Russian, Vietnamese	The verb *be* is not required in all sentences. In some primary languages, it is implied in the adjective form. In others the concept is expressed as a verb.
Passive voice	Omission of helping verb *be* in passive voice The food *finished*.	Cantonese, Vietnamese	Passive voice in the primary language does not require a helping verb.
	Avoidance of passive constructions *They speak Creole here.* *One speaks Creole here.* avoiding the alternate *Creole is spoken here.*	Haitian Creole	Passive constructions do not exist in Haitian Creole.
Transitive verbs versus intransitive verbs	confusion of transitive and intransitive verbs *He married with a nice girl.*	Cantonese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog	Verbs that do and do not take a direct object differ between English and the primary language.
Phrasal verbs	confusion of related phrasal verbs *I look after the word in the dictionary.* instead of *I look up the word in the dictionary.*	Korean, Russian, Spanish	Phrasal verbs do not exist in the primary language. There is often confusion over their meaning in English.
have* versus *be	use of *have* instead of *be* *I have hunger.* *I have right.*	Spanish	Some Spanish constructions use *have* where English uses *be*.

Adverbs

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	use of adjective form where adverb form is needed *Walk quiet.*	Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer	There are no suffix-derived adverb forms in the primary language, and the adjective form is used after the verb.
	placement of adverbs before verbs *At ten o'clock this morning my plane landed.* avoiding the alternate, *My plane landed at ten o'clock this morning.*	Cantonese, Korean	Adverbs usually come before verbs in the primary language, and this tendency is carried over into English.

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	omission of prepositions *Money does not grow trees.*	Cantonese	There are no exact equivalents of English prepositions in Cantonese although there are words to mark location and movement.

Complex Sentences

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
Relative clauses	omission of relative pronouns *My grandfather was a generous man helped everyone.*	Vietnamese	Relative pronouns are not required in Vietnamese.
	incorrect pronoun used to introduce a relative clause *the house who is big*	Hmong	Hmong uses the same forms of relative pronouns for both personal and inanimate antecedents.
Adverbial clauses	inclusion of additional connecting word *Because he was reckless, so he caused an accident.* *Although my parents are poor, but they are very generous.*	Cantonese, Korean, Vietnamese	The primary language sometimes uses a "balancing word" in the main clause.
	use of inconsistent tenses in sentences with multiple clauses *She speaks French before she studied English.* *After she comes home, it was raining.* *We will go to the beach if the weather will be nice.*	Cantonese, Hmong, Tagalog, Vietnamese	The primary language lacks tense markers so that matching the tenses of two verbs in one sentence correctly can be difficult. Learners may also try to analyze the tense needed in English according to meaning, which in some cases can result in the use of an incorrect tense.
If versus when	Confusion of *if* and *when* *If you get there, call me!* instead of *When you get there, call me!*	Korean, Tagalog	The primary language has one expression that covers the use of English *if* and *when* for the future.

Infinitives and Gerunds

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	use of present tense verbs in places where gerunds or infinitives are used in English *Stop walk.* *I want go there.*	Haitian Creole, Khmer, Korean	Either the *–ing* form does not exist in the primary language, or learners tend to use present tense verbs instead of gerunds even if they do exist [Haitian Creole].
	use of *for* in infinitive phrases *They went for to see the movie.*	Spanish	Spanish uses a prepositional form in similar constructions, which is carried over into English and translated as *for*.

Sentence Structure

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	omission of object *He dyed [his hair].* *Yes, I want [some].*	Korean	Korean tends to omit objects and noun phrases after verbs.
	lack of variety in the position of clauses *Because you weren't at home and I couldn't find you, I left.* avoiding the alternate, *I left because you weren't at home and I couldn't find you.*	Korean	Since main clauses always come last in Korean, there is a tendency to put the main clause last in English. This is not an error in English, but it leads to a lack of sentence variety.
	clauses that describe earlier actions come first *After I finish my homework, I will watch TV.* avoiding the alternate, *I will watch TV after I finish my homework.*	Cantonese, Korean	The pattern in the primary language is to describe what happens first while later occurrences follow. This is not an error in English, but it leads to a lack of sentence variety.
	placement of phrase with the indirect object before the direct object *They gave to the girl the book.*	Spanish	The phrase with the indirect object can come before the direct object in Spanish.
	placement of modifiers between verb and direct object *She speaks very well English.*	Korean, Spanish	Word order, including the placement of adverbials, is freer in the primary language than in English.
	use of double negatives *I no see nobody.*	Spanish	Spanish requires double negatives in many sentence structures.
	use of clauses for other structures *I want that you help me.*	Russian, Spanish	Verbs that take direct objects versus those that require clauses differ in the primary language and English.

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Questions

GRAMMAR POINT	TYPE OF TRANSFER ERROR IN ENGLISH	LANGUAGE BACKGROUND	CAUSE OF TRANSFER DIFFICULTY
	avoidance of English inverted question forms in yes/no questions in favor of tag questions or intonation *You come tomorrow, OK?* *He goes to school with you?*	Cantonese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Tagalog, Vietnamese	The primary language doesn't use subject-verb inversion in questions.
	lack of subject-verb inversion in questions with helping verbs *When she will be home?* *Where you are going?*	Cantonese, Hmong, Russian, Tagalog	In the primary language, word order is the same in some questions and statements, depending on the context.
	omission of *do* or *did* in questions *Where you went?*	Haitian Creole, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Tagalog	In the primary language, there is no exact counterpart to the *do/did* verb in questions.
Yes/no questions	incorrect answer form for yes/no questions A: *Do you want more food?* B: *I want.* A: *Do you have a pen?* B: *I not have.*	Cantonese, Hmong, Khmer, Korean, Russian	In the primary language, learners tend to answer yes by repeating the verb in the question. They tend to say no by using *not* and repeating the verb.
	positive answer to negative question A: *Aren't you going?* B: *Yes.* when the person is not going	Cantonese, Korean, Russian	The appropriate response pattern differs between the primary language and English.
Tag questions	incorrect tag questions *You want to go home, are you?*	Cantonese, Khmer, Korean, Vietnamese	The primary language has no exact counterpart to a tag question, forms them differently, or does not add *do/did* to questions.

Phonics Transfer Issues for Seven Languages

Sound Transfer (Phonology)

The symbol ● identifies areas in which these primary language speakers may have some difficulty pronouncing and perceiving spoken English. The sound may not exist in the primary language, may exist but be pronounced somewhat differently, or may be confused with another sound. Sound production and perception issues impact phonics instruction.

Consonants

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
/b/ as in bat			●	●		●	
/k/ as in cat and kite			●				
/d/ as in dog				●		●	
/f/ as in fan						●	
/g/ as in goat			●	●		●	●
/h/ as in hen					●		
/j/ as in jacket	●	●	●	●		●	
/l/ as in lemon						●	
/m/ as in money							
/n/ as in nail							
/p/ as in pig			●				
/r/ as in rabbit	●		●	●	●	●	
/s/ as in sun			●				
/t/ as in teen		●	●				
/v/ as in video	●			●		●	●
/w/ as in wagon	●		●				●
/y/ as in yo-yo							
/z/ as in zebra	●		●	●		●	●
/kw/ as in queen			●				
/ks/ as in Xray			●	●			

Short Vowels

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
short *a* as in hat	●	●		●		●	
short *e* as in set	●		●	●	●	●	
short *i* as in sit	●	●	●	●	●	●	
short *o* as in hot	●		●			●	
short *u* as in cup	●		●	●	●	●	

Long Vowels

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
long *a* as in d<u>a</u>te			•	•			
long *e* as in b<u>e</u>				•		•	
long *i* as in <u>i</u>ce				•			
long *o* as in r<u>oa</u>d			•	•			
long *u* as in tr<u>ue</u>				•		•	

Vowel Patterns

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
oo as in b<u>oo</u>k	•	•	•		•	•	•
aw as in s<u>aw</u>	•					•	

Diphthongs

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
oy as in b<u>oy</u>			•				
ow as in h<u>ow</u>	•						

R-controlled Vowels

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
ir as in b<u>ir</u>d	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ar as in h<u>ar</u>d	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
or as in f<u>or</u>m	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
air as in h<u>air</u>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ear as in h<u>ear</u>	•	•	•	•	•	•	•

Consonant Digraphs

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
sh as in <u>sh</u>oe *	•	•		•			•
ch as in <u>ch</u>ain		•		•			
th as in <u>th</u>ink	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
ng as in si<u>ng</u>	•		•		•		

Consonant Blends

SOUND	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	CANTONESE	HAITIAN CREOLE	KOREAN	KHMER
bl, tr, dr, etc. (start of words) as in <u>bl</u>ack, <u>tr</u>ee, <u>dr</u>ess		•	•	•		•	
ld, nt, rt, etc. (end of words) as in co<u>ld</u>, te<u>nt</u>, sta<u>rt</u>		•	•	•	•	•	•

*Spanish speakers from Mexico or Central America who also speak Nahuatl or a Mayan language will be familiar with this sound, written as an *x* in words like *mixteca* (pronounced *mishteca*).

Sound-Symbol Transfer (Phonics)

The following chart identifies sound-symbol transfer issues for four languages that use the roman alphabet. (The remaining three do not.) The symbol ● identifies symbols which do not represent the corresponding sound in the writing system of the primary language.

Consonants

SOUND-SYMBOLS	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	HAITIAN CREOLE
b as in bat			●	
c as in cat		●	●	●
as in cent		●	●	
d as in dog				
f as in fish				
g as in goat			●	
as in giant	●		●	
h as in hen	●			
j as in jacket	●	●	●	
k as in kite			●	
l as in lemon				
m as in moon				
n as in nice				
p as in pig				
qu as in queen	●		●	●
r as in rabbit	●		●	
s as in sun			●	
t as in teen			●	
v as in video	●			
w as in wagon		●	●	
x as in Xray		●	●	●
y as in yo-yo	●			
z as in zebra	●	●	●	

Consonant Digraphs

SOUND-SYMBOLS	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	HAITIAN CREOLE
sh as in shoe	●			
ch as in chair				●
th as in think	●			●
as in that				

SOUND-SYMBOLS	SPANISH	VIETNAMESE	HMONG	HAITIAN CREOLE
a as in b<u>a</u>t	●		●	
aCe as in d<u>a</u>te	●	●		
ai as in r<u>ai</u>n	●	●	●	●
ay as in d<u>ay</u>	●		●	●
au as in <u>au</u>thor	●	●	●	●
aw as in s<u>aw</u>	●	●	●	●
e as in b<u>e</u>t	●		●	●
ee as in s<u>ee</u>d	●	●	●	●
ea as in t<u>ea</u>	●	●	●	●
ew as in f<u>ew</u>	●	●	●	●
i as in s<u>i</u>t	●		●	●
iCe as in p<u>i</u>pe	●	●	●	●
o as in h<u>o</u>t	●		●	●
o as in r<u>o</u>de	●	●	●	●
oo as in m<u>oo</u>n	●	●	●	●
oo as in b<u>oo</u>k	●		●	●
oa as in b<u>oa</u>t	●	●	●	●
ow as in r<u>ow</u>	●	●	●	●
ow as in h<u>ow</u>	●	●	●	●
ou as in s<u>ou</u>nd	●	●	●	●
oi as in b<u>oi</u>l			●	●
oy as in b<u>oy</u>		●	●	●
u as in c<u>u</u>p	●	●	●	●
uCe as in J<u>u</u>ne	●	●		
ui as in s<u>ui</u>t	●	●	●	●
ue as in bl<u>ue</u>	●	●	●	●
y as in tr<u>y</u>	●	●	●	●
ar as in st<u>ar</u>			●	●
er as in f<u>er</u>n	●		●	●
ir as in b<u>ir</u>d	●		●	●
or as in t<u>or</u>n	●		●	
ur as in b<u>ur</u>n	●		●	

Word Study Information for Five Languages

Spanish

English and Spanish share some basic linguistic characteristics, such as using word parts like prefixes and suffixes and changing verb forms. The Word Study scope and sequence used in the *Rigby On Our Way to English* program will work well with Spanish-speaking students. The chart below provides some helpful information about prefixes and suffixes that serve similar functions in English and Spanish and can be used during those lessons. These Spanish word parts can be used as a reference for students doing prefix and suffix lessons. Note that the example words are not intended to be cognates, but words that illustrate the similar meaning of the word parts.

Prefixes

ENGLISH WORD PART OR PARTS	ENGLISH EXAMPLE WORDS	SPANISH WORD PART OR PARTS	SPANISH EXAMPLE WORDS	WORD PART PURPOSE
un-, non-, in-, dis-	unhappy nonstop incorrect dislike	*in-, des-/dis-* no plus the verb sin plus the noun or verb	infeliz, incorrecto desconocido disparejo no gustar sin parar	Means "not"
re-	redo	*re-*	rehacer	Means "again"
pre-	preteen	*pre-*	preescolar	Means "before"

Suffixes

ENGLISH WORD PART OR PARTS	ENGLISH EXAMPLE WORDS	SPANISH WORD PART OR PARTS	SPANISH EXAMPLE WORDS	WORD PART PURPOSE
-ful	powerful	*-oso/a*	poderoso/a	Means "with"; turns a noun into an adjective
-able	readable likeable	*-ible* *-able*	legible agradable	Turns a verb into an adjective
-less	fearless careless	sin plus the noun prefix *des-*	sin miedo descuidado	Means "without"; turns a noun into an adjective
-ness	happiness	*-idad*	felicidad	Turns an adjective into a noun
-ion/-tion, -ment	reaction payment amazement	*-ción/-sión* verb stem + *-o*	reacción conclusión pago asombro	Turns a verb into a noun
-ly	quickly	*-mente*	rápidamente	Turns an adjective into an adverb

Haitian Creole, Cantonese, Hmong, and Vietnamese

These languages do not use word parts to construct new words in the same way that English does. Because of this, you may want to delay instruction on prefixes and suffixes until the end of the year.

Student Language and Literacy Survey

Student Name: _____ **Date:** _____

The following surveys will provide insight into English language learners' language use and literacy practices in both their first languages and English. The surveys should be administered orally to each student in English or, if necessary, in the student's first language. If the person administering the surveys does not speak the student's first language, then paraprofessionals or bilingual students might be helpful in obtaining this information. The results of the surveys can be used to place each student in an appropriate program for English language learners and to inform instruction. Photocopy this page to document the information for each student.

HOME LANGUAGE SURVEY

Do you speak any other languages when you are not at school?   YES   NO

What languages? _____

How many years have you attended school in the U.S.? _____ years

How many years have you attended school in another country? _____ years

ORAL LANGUAGE SURVEY

Where do you speak _____ ?
(student's first language)

In school?	YES	NO
At home?	YES	NO
At the store?	YES	NO
At the doctor's office?	YES	NO
At restaurants or fast food places?	YES	NO
Anywhere else? _____		

Where do you speak English?

In school?	YES	NO
At home?	YES	NO
At the store?	YES	NO
At the doctor's office?	YES	NO
At restaurants or fast food places?	YES	NO
Anywhere else? _____		

LITERACY SURVEY

What do you read in _____ ?
(student's first language)

Magazines?	YES	NO
Books?	YES	NO
Mail?	YES	NO
Information from the Internet?	YES	NO
E-mail?	YES	NO
Anything else? _____		

What do you read in English?

Magazines?	YES	NO
Books?	YES	NO
Mail?	YES	NO
Information from the Internet?	YES	NO
E-mail?	YES	NO
Anything else? _____		

What do you write in _____ ?
(student's first language)

Letters?	YES	NO
Notes?	YES	NO
Information on forms?	YES	NO
E-mails?	YES	NO
Stories?	YES	NO
Anything else? _____		

What do you write in English?

Letters?	YES	NO
Notes?	YES	NO
Information on forms?	YES	NO
E-mails?	YES	NO
Stories?	YES	NO
Anything else? _____		