

Kinds of Support

Don Bouchard: And I recall one day, um, a student, who was a teacher at a high school in one of the Maine communities, come, who came in to me, and he was so excited about, um, uh, something that he had done, and he really wanted to tell me about it, so ok, go ahead! He said, “Well,” he says, “Look, I’m a, I’m a social studies teacher, and I have all these ESL students, and I decided, you know, based on our discussion last week, I decided to require the students to read, um, such and such chapter in this text and answer X, Y, and Z questions. And I said, but, I said you folks need to answer the questions in your home languages.” And they looked at him as if he was crazy, so what? You know Spanish, Tai, Japanese? The list went on. And he said, “Nah, just answer the questions.” So they dutifully answer the questions, came in the next day, and they proceeded, one by one, to respond to the questions in their home language. ‘Course the teacher didn’t understand a word, but here’s what he did. He said, “That’s great!” he said, “Now tell me what you just said in English.” He got more English out of them than he had ever gotten before. Now they had the benefit, as high school students—and they were, many of them were international students—the benefit of schooling in their home language, so that cognitive development in that, in their home language was a, was a key factor. But it really showed how the home language can be useful in tapping in to the cognitive reservoir of, of um, one’s, uh, use in a target language. The point I’m trying to make is this, that, um, in the WIDA Consortium and in the development of Model Performance Indicators, um, do not discount the use of the home language as one, as an exemplar, or as a, as an anchor possibility. It is not necessarily restricted to a Level 1 either. Not necessarily. So I’m just saying that because what you need to look at, nothing should be thrown out. What one needs to look at is the usefulness and the pragmatic quality of the kind of, um, uh, um, activity, strategy or whatever if it serves a purpose.