



Fall 2007

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An American
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Topical Riff

A Picture is
Worth 1,000
Words

101
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Answers
from
Crawford &
Krashen

[/Index/](#)
[/Letters/](#)
[/Profiles/](#)
[/Search/](#)
[/Podcasts/](#)

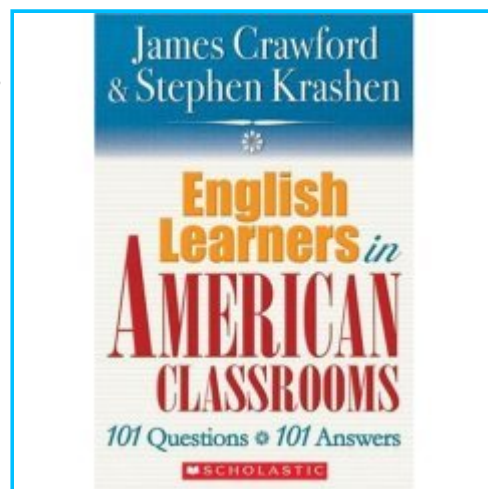
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ESL MiniConference

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Krashen and Crawford's New Venture Launches Its First Publication

I appreciate that Scholastic sent me a complimentary copy of "English Learners in American Classrooms: 101 Questions and 101 Answers," the new book by Stephen D. Krashen and James Crawford. The ESL MiniConference is always interested in receiving review copies of important new texts in ESL, EFL, or second language instruction. ESL MiniConference Online is the leading aggregator of new content related to the teaching of English, and our Web-based



newsletter is accessed by more than 15,000 teachers, administrators, and others interested in the field of ESL/EFL around the globe every month.

Full disclosure: Dr. Stephen D. Krashen, co-author of the book being reviewed in this article, is a member of the [Editorial Advisory Board](#) of the ESL MiniConference Online.

The first time I met Steve Krashen was at a New Jersey TESOL/BE conference, in the spring of 2002, which I was covering for my new online newsletter, the ESL MiniConference. I was very excited about seeing the co-author of one of the books which has had the deepest and longest lasting influence on my ESL/EFL career, "The Natural Approach" (1983). This important book synthesized research by a number of people, including crucial contributions in the area of learner motivation by H. Douglas Brown, and presented the key terms and concepts which would hold sway for nearly a full decade in the field of ESL and second language learning, as well as dominating the list of session topics for TESOL conventions during those years.

That night in 2002, I was in such awe of the presence of this ESL superstar that I did not realize fully until I had seen several more of his presentations--at Kansas TESOL in 2004 and at a Migrant Education event in Wichita in the summer of 2005--that he had a very nicely

polished canned speech which he just repeated again each time he spoke. It was a great talk (you can see it on the Kansas TESOL site at <http://katesol.org/video/>), and Dr. Krashen is really funny as he makes light of everything from "No Child Left Behind" to English-only movements. He actually gave this talk four times in one day at the Kansas TESOL conference, to accommodate relentless demand among the 300 attendees that year to hear from this famous scholar.

But I really noticed the fire in Stephen Krashen's heart and mind when he opened his online site, sdkrashen.com, and started pumping out e-mails to a growing listserv and allowed us to see how prolific and vigilant he was and is in facing down the foes of bilingual education, by publishing letters to the editor in newspapers from coast to coast and around the world.

It was no accident that NABE (the National Association of Bilingual Educators) suddenly shifted into a higher gear and directly confronted the Department of Education and the Bush administration on issues vital to the needs of English language learners in 2003 and 2004, at the same time that Steve Krashen got voted onto NABE's board and James Crawford (see his old language policy [Web site](#)) was chosen by the board to be the executive director of NABE.

NABE is kind of a dinosaur as an organization, and pretty quickly the new activism of Crawford, Krashen and several other board members was quelled, and Crawford was pushed out of office in 2005. But he did not go quietly. Steve Krashen led a massive online protest movement to try to force NABE's hand and, when that failed, Crawford and Krashen announced they were forming a new organization, the Institute for Language and Education Policy (elladvocates.org). Many of the same big names in ESL and bilingual education who had signed onto the petition drive became the founding members of this new institute.

It is great to see the new book that has resulted from this important collaboration between two talented ESL specialists who are also gifted at communicating their ideas and the research to educators. The data they provide to answer these 101 questions is solid and compelling. The information in this book will give teachers and administrators the intellectual ammunition they need to advocate effectively on behalf of newcomers, English language learners, and culturally and linguistically diverse children in all the schools of America today.

I would especially encourage school boards in states with high numbers of immigrant ELLs to carefully read the sections on "Students" and

"Programs," including question five, "What are the worst mistakes schools make in serving ELL students?" and question six, "What types of instructional programs are designed to address the needs of ELLs?"

According to Crawford and Krashen, the worst mistakes are: 1) denial of language learning needs, also referred to as the "sink or swim" philosophy of language learning; 2) delegating ELL "problems" to specialists instead of "involving the entire school"; and 3) remediation, or "an impulse to 'cure' ELL's 'language disability' rather than recognizing the native language as a resource to support English acquisition."

If I were a school administrator, I would post these questions and answers, several per week, prominently throughout the school and engage in discussions with all members of the faculty regarding the relevance of this information for their particular challenges and opportunities in teaching and mentoring English language learners.

I am so happy and so excited to see Steven Krashen "on fire" these days. Few ESL/EFL scholars would be able to galvanize the interest and support required to launch a policy institute like he and Crawford have done. If this book is any indication, we can look forward to many concrete results from their collaboration.

The book is at [Amazon Online](#).

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