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# Teaching English As a Second Language Students Literacy: a Comprehensive Literacy Model for Monolingual Educators

Kristen M. Rodgers  
*Regis University*

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TEACHING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE STUDENTS LITERACY: A  
COMPREHENSIVE LITERACY MODEL FOR MONOLINGUAL EDUCATORS

by

Kristen M. Rodgers

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
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Name of EDRS 642 Instructor: S. Sweet

## ABSTRACT

### Teaching English as a Second Language Students Literacy: A Comprehensive Literacy Model for Monolingual Educators

This research project, utilizing both primary and secondary sources, provides teachers with effective methods and activities to develop literacy in a monolingual classroom for English as a second language (ESL) students. The literacy methods and activities within this research project are broken into the five components of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) and writing. The conclusion of this research project provides teachers with the necessary steps to enhance literacy instruction for ESL students.

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

A large portion of time for an English as a second language (ESL) student in the United States is spent in a classroom with a monolingual teacher who, is often from the mainstream culture and who is culturally different from the student and their family (Leu, 1997). These cultural differences can create barriers to communication and understanding with ESL students and their families, which are special challenges for their teachers. When one considers the many needs and barriers that ESL students have, one gains an understanding of the vital importance of the instructional methods and educational environment provided by the monolingual teacher. It is essential that the mainstream teacher be well versed in the effective instructional methods to enhance the educational instruction of ESL students. Also, it is imperative that the mainstream teacher be able to establish an environment that is personable, open, and positive in order for ESL students to feel relaxed and confident.

#### Statement of the Problem

One of the fundamental goals of primary education is to develop literacy in students. Many factors can have an impact on the ability of students to achieve this goal, for example, all students enter the classroom with different levels of literacy skills (i.e. exposure to and understanding of phonemes, different levels of vocabulary, etc). However, ESL students also start their formal education with varying levels of literacy

skills but, they also, begin their formal education in a language to which they may have had little, if any, exposure. Since ESL students spend a large amount of time in a classroom with a monolingual teacher, teachers need to educate themselves about the methods and activities which can be effective to assist their ESL students to develop literacy.

### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to develop a comprehensive literacy model to be used in the classroom by monolingual teachers of ESL students. The author of this project presented research on the cultures inside and outside the classroom, the five components of reading, as well as, writing. Also, the author presented research on different methods and activities that help ESL students develop literacy. The author took the reader through the steps necessary to enhance literacy instruction for ESL students.

### Chapter Summary

The ESL student may begin his or her formal education behind most students because he or she has yet to learn English. Typically, their English literacy skills are lower than most students when they begin kindergarten and, at a time, when they are barely fluent in their native language, they are asked to learn a second one. It is crucial for the monolingual teacher to understand the special needs of the ESL student and to gain as much knowledge as possible about effective strategies that assist their students to succeed and even excel in the acquisition of literacy. The purpose of this project is to give monolingual teachers access to effective methods and activities from the most recent research that will help ESL students develop literacy. In Chapter 2, the writer discusses the different cultures inside and outside the classroom and the perspectives that both

parents and educators bring to the classroom. The writer presents methods that teachers can use with parents to bridge the two cultures. The writer continues the chapter with a discussion of the five components of reading and their importance, the process of writing and its importance, and ends the chapter with a summary. In Chapter 3, the writer defines the target audience, identifies the procedures the writer took in order to complete the comprehensive literacy model, identifies the author's goals of the applied project, describes the peer assessments, and ends the chapter with a summary.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project is to provide teachers with the necessary steps to enhance literacy instruction for ESL students. The author begins the necessary steps by providing the reader with a review of literature on education methodology. In this review of literature, the reader will be able to look through the cultural lenses of parents and teachers. This review will illustrate how research shows that, when teachers and parents work together, the child will benefit in the classroom, and the classroom will become a positive environment in which to learn. This positive environment is key to the student's success in his or her development of literacy. Continuing through the review the reader learns the six strands of a comprehensive literacy model (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and writing) and why this model is particularly important for the ESL student. The author emphasizes that these six strands do not function individually or in isolation with each skill, but must work as a group in order to build upon the successful acquisition of the previous skill.

#### Home vs. Classroom Cultures

The culture of the home may differ from the culture of the classroom. Students and their families may differ from their monolingual teacher in regard to: (a) dependency (e.g., being an independent individual or not); (b) customs; (c) behavior; (d) the means by which they praise and discipline; and (e) child rearing practices (Gordon, 2007). These differences can result in cultural clash where parents and teachers may make

assumptions and have many misunderstandings about the other. This author will attempt to analyze the goals, expectations, and concerns of the parents and the teachers, and how both sides can work together to make an accepting, encouraging, and peaceful classroom environment that blends the home and classroom cultures.

### *Parents' Perspectives*

Parents are aware of how important it is to acquire fluency in English and the value of a good education for their children (Lahman & Park, 2004; Valdes, 1996). Parents want what is best for their children and, often, they are willing to make great sacrifices for their children to succeed. Parents want their children to make friends with their classmates of the mainstream culture (Gaitan, 2006). However, research shows that this can be a difficult goal for their children to accomplish. In a study conducted by Schmidt (1992), it was extremely difficult for two students, one from Southeast Asia and one of Indian origin, to make friends because the other children did not want to play with them, and the teacher made no effort to encourage the majority of the group. Schmidt also demonstrates that it is important that teachers provide a secure socialization experience.

After her review of the literature in this section, in the author's opinion, the biggest struggle parents have with teachers is in the area of communication. Parents who do not speak English may feel confused about the United States public school system and their role in it. These parents feel that the school staff misunderstands them because of the language barrier between them and the school (Valdes, 1996). Many parents, who speak no English, feel as though school staff do not communicate properly with them and when they do communicate with them, the parents feel as though the communication is

degrading (e.g., parents feel administration treats them like children) (Trumbull, Rothstein-Fisch, Greenfield, & Quiroz, 2001). Schmidt (1992) found that communication among parents and teachers was difficult and that teachers did not comment on students' problems during the school year because the teacher did not understand how to communicate effectively with the parents.

In addition to the lack of communication, parents fear that their children will become too Americanized and that, over time, their children will become accustomed to their new culture and feel like strangers in their own homes (Gordon, 2007). Parents fear that children will begin to drift away from their family's culture and lose their first language (Gordon). The latter fear is not without basis; Soto, Smrekar, and Nekcovei (1999) reported that, often, families are told to speak only English to their child even while at home, which could cause the child to lose fluency in the native language and some of the experiences of the culture. The concern of the undermining of the family culture was identified in Valdes' (1996) study where parents wanted their children to succeed in the acquisition of English but, at the same time, were concerned that their authority might be jeopardized because they could not understand their own children when they spoke. This same concern surfaced in a study conducted by Lahman and Park (2004) where Chinese and Korean parents felt that the acquisition of the second language might undermine family culture; Park and Lahman noted parents' concern that socialization would lead to assimilation in the mainstream culture and a loss of appreciation for and understanding of their own culture.

### *Teachers' Perspectives*

Teachers and the parents of ESL students look at situations through a different cultural lens. Many teachers perceive minority students' behavior as inappropriate because it is not like that of U.S. children (Gordon, 2007; Trumbull et al., 2001). Gaitan (2006) maintained that, because teachers do not visit the homes of all their students, they cannot see the interactions that a child has outside of the classroom and may stereotype their behavior inside the classroom. This idea was evident in one incident in Valdes' (1996) study. A teacher thought there was something wrong with her ESL students because, during recess, they were seen "standing alone on the playground, refusing to respond when other children spoke to them" (p. 146). Had the teacher gone to the home, she would have seen these same children as they ran around happily playing with their siblings. The children were brought up to not trust outsiders and to play only with their siblings. However, no matter how many different cultures and individual tendencies within cultures that a teacher studies, there will still be times when a teacher is puzzled. There are too many cultural patterns that a teacher needs to be aware of and, at times, this can be overwhelming.

In addition to dissimilar behaviors, teachers feel that some students are difficult to discipline and that parents do not share in the education of their child (Gaitan, 2006; Trumbull et al., 2001). Just as with behaviors, it is difficult for a teacher to be able to know all the cultural nuances and ways to discipline a child. Gaitan stated, "Cultures have different beliefs about ways to deal with children's defiance to adult authority" (p. 18). School staff establishes discipline programs that, typically, are used to address students' behavior; however, these programs may be too broad for some students and

leave teachers at a loss about how to control the students' behavior. Also, teachers should not simply assume that, because a group of students have the same background, they will respond to the same type of discipline (Gaitan). The members of some cultures still believe in the physical discipline of a child. In Valdes' (1996) study, some of the ESL parents believed that, for more serious behavioral problems, "physical punishment by the father was still considered to be the ultimate solution" (p. 129). Also, in Lahman and Park's (2004) study, many parents reported that they spanked their children for discipline. By law, in the U.S. public school system, school staff cannot physically punish a student for bad behavior which can make it difficult for teachers to develop discipline guidelines that will be appropriate for all students in the classroom. Besides discipline issues, teachers may feel that parents, who are less involved in school participation, are less interested or not as concerned about the child's education (Gaitan; Trumbull et al.).

### *Bridging Cultures in the Classroom*

Bridging cultures, in this author's opinion, between parents and the teacher inside the classroom is key for the student's success in education. Conscientious teachers need to be aware of cultural differences and strive to build a bridge between their students' home cultures and the culture of the classroom; yet, the effort to build that bridge can be a frustrating experience. There are many ideas about how to combine two cultures inside the classroom. Many authors (Allen, McNeill, & Schmidt, 1992; Gaitan, 2006; Gordon, 2007; Soto et al., 1999) believe that teachers should begin with a friendly, personable environment, where students are relaxed and have confidence in their learning and work with their second language. Particularly important for the latter is an environment in

which mistakes are not punished. This environment should enable students to share their cultures with their classmates. The physical environment should include bulletin boards and reading texts that represent the student's culture and community. The better students feel about themselves, the better they will achieve academically. Teachers need to: (a) filter out the negative feelings inside the classroom, (b) establish a culturally accepting place, and (c) encourage students to bond with each other and the teacher. The latter idea is difficult to accomplish as was seen in the Valdez (1996) and Schmidt (1992) studies, but it is key for the overall confidence level of the student.

In addition, many authors (Allen et al., 1992; Gaitan, 2006; Gordon, 2007; Soto et al., 1999) believe that a well rounded curriculum, based on culture, is another important facet of the classroom environment. The content taught in the classroom should be inclusive of: (a) the teacher's culture, (b) the student's culture, (c) the families' culture, and (d) the school policies. A curriculum should be based on cultural awareness, which provides the benefit of diverse education and appreciation for other cultures. When students' cultures and celebrated holidays are present in the curriculum, it shows students that they are valued and important. Schmidt (1992) found that one teacher did not bring holidays, other than U.S. holidays into the classroom. This idea confused the two students for they did not fully grasp the concept or meaning of the U.S. holidays and knew only that their holidays, which were personally and culturally important, seemed to not be important to the class. Also, a teacher can provide students with parental and community knowledge and authentic guest speakers. The more opportunities a teacher can provide for the students to speak and communicate with one another, the better the educational environment of the students will be.

The last piece to the puzzle is communication and the development of a parent/teacher relationship. Many authors (Allen et al., 1992; Gaitan, 2006; Lahman & Park, 2004; Schmidt, 1992; Soto et al., 1999; Trumbull et al., 2001; Valdes, 1996) have reported that an open line of communication from home to school is crucial and it should be in both oral and written forms. Communication allows teachers and parents to share mutually understood goals and enable parents to understand the policies and practices behind the school programs. When parents understand the school system better, they will have less fear about school. For parent/teacher relationships to be successful, there must be open communication, and school staff should attempt to alleviate the language barriers between the parents and teachers. Teachers should become more flexible and encourage classroom visits, parental volunteers, and welcome extended family members. Teachers should try to incorporate small interactions with parents on a daily basis and place themselves in the parents' shoes and try to see their point of view. When communication breaks down between parents and teachers, stereotypes, confusion, anger, and assumptions can occur. Lahman and Park (2004) stated, "Understanding individual differences in families and their relation to environmental, cultural, and ecological factors is important to effective teaching" (p. 140).

#### The Importance of Reading and Its Five Components

The five components of reading (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) are the building blocks of literacy, and a student must have knowledge of the first component before he or she can progress to another component. If a student lacks one of these five components, reading will be difficult for the student, and

the student will struggle. In this section, the author will describe in detail each of the five components and provide the reader with definitions and an explanation of its importance.

### *Phonemic Awareness*

Phonemic awareness has been defined in many different, but similar ways, and it is the fundamental component in learning how to read. According to Armbruster, Lehr, and Osborn (2003), “phonemic awareness is the ability to notice, think about, and work with the individual sounds in spoken words” (p. 2). Students should be able to know the sound structure of a word and know that words are composed of smaller units called phonemes (Lyon, 1998; Norris & Hoffman, 2002). Phonemes are the smallest units of the spoken language which consist of approximately 41-51 phonemes (Ehri, 2004; Tankersley, 2003). Another aspect of phonemic awareness is the ability to manipulate, separate, and blend sounds with different instructional tasks (Davidson & Jenkins, 1994; Opitz, 2000; Rasinski & Padak, 2008; Tankersley; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Instruction for phonemic awareness should begin with easier tasks and, as students grasp the concepts, they should progress to more challenging tasks (Norris & Hoffman). Instruction should be conducted in small group settings (Armbruster et al.). According to Norris and Hoffman, “phonemic awareness is a complex developmental ability that children acquire only gradually when provided experiences and opportunities to learn about the form of oral and written language” (p. 7). This idea, to provide students with learning opportunities, goes back to the manipulation of sounds and task instruction.

The component of phonemic awareness has vital importance in learning to read. Many researchers (Opitz, 2000; Rasinski & Padak, 2008; Tankersley, 2003; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004) believe that skill in phonemic awareness is a good predictor of a

student's success in reading. Phonemic awareness helps students to begin to use invented spelling and word reading (Armbruster et al., 2003; Davidson & Jenkins, 1994; Manning & Kato, 2006). Also, phonemic awareness provides students with the necessary tools to understand the alphabetic principle (Chard & Dickson, 1999). The results from a multiple regression analysis conducted by Juel, Griffith, and Gough (1986), indicate that phonemic awareness is needed in order for children to be able to read and write. Also, the results showed that phonemic awareness had an impact on: (a) word recognition, (b) spelling, (c) reading comprehension, and (e) writing. According to Rasinski and Padak (2008), "phonemic awareness is essential for phonics" (p. 57) which is the next building block of the reading components.

### *Phonics*

According to Armbruster et al. (2003), "phonics instruction teaches children the relationships between the letters (graphemes) of written language and the individual sounds (phonemes) of spoken language" (p. 12). Simply put, phonics enables students to link the sounds (i.e., phonemic awareness) with the letters of the alphabet (Beck, 2006; Lyon, 1998; Opitz, 2000). The linking of sounds and letters is the alphabetic principle which enables students to identify and use a letter/sound relationship to decode words that they do not recognize (Lesaux, Geva, Koda, Siegel, & Shanahan, 2008; Tankersley, 2003; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004; Villaume & Brabham, 2003). Also, understanding the letter/sound relationship helps students learn how to spell (Rasinski & Padak, 2008; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson). Findings from the National Reading Panel (as cited in Armbruster et al., 2003) showed that "systematic and explicit phonics instruction is more effective than non-systematic or no phonics instruction" (p. 13), and

Ehri (2004) stated that “phonics instruction is systematic when all of the major letter-sound correspondences are taught and are covered in a clearly defined sequence” (p. 167). Put simply, phonics instruction should be systematic and taught in sequence.

One important aspect of phonics is that student’s knowledge of the alphabetic principle will aid them in: (a) word recognition, (b) spelling, and (c) fluency (Armbruster et al., 2003; Ehri, 2004; Villaume & Brabham, 2003). When students become fluent, they can begin to comprehend what they read in print (Armbruster et al.; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Knowledge of phonics helps students with reading acquisition, and it has a greater impact on reading acquisition in the earlier grades (Ehri). Phonics is particularly helpful to students who have reading difficulties or problems, or who are at-risk for reading difficulties (Armbruster et al.).

### *Vocabulary*

Vocabulary is the third element of the five components, and Armbruster et al. (2003) defined it as “words we must know to communicate effectively” (p. 34). Armbruster et al. reported that vocabulary can be divided into oral (e.g., words students use to speak) or reading (e.g., words used in print). From the word used in print, students will learn recognition (e.g., words students can pronounce) and meaning (e.g., words students can understand and can use; Cooper & Kiger, 2006). In the classroom, students learn words both directly and indirectly (Armbruster et al.; Tankersley, 2003). There are many strategies that can be used to uncover the meaning of a word in print (Armbruster et al.; Rasinski & Padak, 2008). Vocabulary acquisition is taught in levels or tiers. Depending on the source, there are either 3 tiers or 4 levels: (a) unknown (the word is unknown to the student); (b) knowledge that the word exists (students may have heard the

word before but do not know what it is or what it means); (c) partial knowledge (students have a generalized understanding of the word); and (d) complete knowledge (students have complete knowledge and understanding of the word) (Blachowicz, Fisher, & Watts-Taffe, 2005; Tankersley).

Vocabulary is an important aspect of learning how to read, because a student's ability to speak effectively increases the student's participation inside the classroom (Blachowicz et al. 2005). Vocabulary instruction provides students with the opportunity to develop new understanding and acquire a deeper knowledge of words. Also, "vocabulary instruction is critical to the improvement of comprehension and written expression" (Blachowicz et al., p. 2). The acquisition of vocabulary enables a student to understand the meaning behind a word which is one factor of comprehension (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004). Oral vocabulary is important because it helps students when they begin to see words in print (Armbruster et al., 2003).

### *Fluency*

"Fluency is the ability to read a text accurately and quickly" (Armbruster et al., 2003, p. 22). Numerous researchers (Armbruster et al.; Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006; Rasinski & Padak, 2008; Tankersley, 2003; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004) maintain that, in order for a student to be a fluent reader, the student must be able to read: (a) with expression, (b) with a natural tone, (c) accurately, (d) quickly, (e) meaningfully, and (f) automatically. Fluency develops over time and must be practiced frequently in the classroom. Fluency should be emphasized in the beginning stages of reading (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson). Once a student develops automaticity, no longer does he or she have to take the time to decode words and can focus on comprehension. Also, fluent readers

are able to make connections from their prior background knowledge to the text they read (Tankersley).

Fluency is an important piece in reading because it “provides a bridge between word recognition and comprehension” (Armbruster et al., 2003, p. 22). Fluency is the link to comprehension, and the presence of fluency encourages students to read with meaning, not only for meaning (Rasinski & Padak, 2008). Students, who are fluent, no longer have to focus on decoding their words and can concentrate on comprehension of the text (Tankersley, 2003). Also, the presence of fluency results in motivated readers because they no longer stumble from page to page and are able to read for fun (Hasbrouck & Tindal, 2006; Klein, 1988; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004).

### *Comprehension*

Comprehension is the final component of reading. According to Lesaux et al. (2008), “reading comprehension poses the challenge of translating printed words into sounds in an accurate and efficient manner while constructing meaning out of what is being read” (p. 32). With comprehension, students finally begin to read for a purpose and become active readers when they can make connections from their previous experiences to the text (Armbruster et al., 2003; Klein, 1988; Tankersley, 2003). Teachers should introduce comprehension in the primary grades in order to build a solid foundation, and should continue to emphasize the importance of comprehension through all grade levels (Armbruster et al.). In order for students to comprehend the text, teachers must teach their students comprehension strategies that students can use while they read. There are many strategies that should be taught directly and modeled by the teacher (Armbruster et al.; Cooper & Kiger, 2006; Kamil, 2004; Klein; Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004).

Kamil (2004) stated, “Comprehension is the ultimate goal in reading instruction” (p. 221), and it is the reason for students to read (Armbruster et al., 2003).

Comprehension is important because it allows students to: (a) make connections, (b) gain understanding, and (c) appreciate what they read. If students do not possess comprehension skills, then they will gain no pleasure or knowledge from their reading. Also, the acquisition of comprehension helps students when they take state level tests (Vaughn & Linan-Thompson, 2004).

### Writing and Its Importance

Writing is the final piece of a student’s literacy program, and it should be utilized daily (Cooper & Kiger, 2006). A daily writing period will increase fluency and legibility of handwriting (Masters, 1987). The writing process should begin in kindergarten, even though students may be at various stages in their writing (Cooper & Kiger). Writing closely mirrors reading so it is easy to incorporate into teacher instruction. When students read, they write their opinions and summaries of the piece they read; when students write, inevitably, they read their own piece. There are many activities that will connect reading and writing in the classroom (Cooper & Kiger). Writing can be formal (e.g., planning, drafting, composing, revising, proofreading, and publishing) or informal (e.g., journal entries and diaries) (Cooper & Kiger; Urquhart & McIver, 2005). Writing should be taught directly and teachers should provide guided practice when needed (Masters). Writing has been shown to have close ties with cultural values inside the classroom. Kennedy (2006) discovered there is an emotional disconnect between native and mainstream cultures, which is seen especially in students’ writing. During written instruction, Kennedy found that, when students connected their two languages through a

natural writing process (e.g., a process where students can write about anything and use either English or their native language), it helped the students to write.

Writing is important because students draw on prior experiences, review the ideas being presented in the class, and evaluate the knowledge they have learned in order to prepare for and complete a written piece (Urquhart & McIver, 2005). Also, writing can improve reading comprehension, because a basic reading comprehension strategy is summarization, and writing helps students to construct meaning (Cooper & Kiger, 2006). Teachers can motivate students to read and activate prior knowledge when they have them write prior to the reading lesson being assigned (Klein, 1988). Cunningham and Stanovich (1990) found that early writing instruction helped students to acquire spelling skills earlier.

#### Chapter Summary

“No yardstick can measure cultural uniqueness. We must continually remind ourselves that no one culture is higher or lower, richer or poorer, greater or lesser than any other” (Gaitan, 2006, p. 153). It is imperative that the cultures inside and outside the classroom come together in order to establish a positive environment for the students to learn and for the teacher and parents to develop a good relationship. The six strands of the literacy model were described to give the reader a sense of what a teacher must present every day inside the classroom in order to teach the students effectively. All strands need to be present, and each student needs to gain the understanding and knowledge of each component before he or she progresses to the next. Each student learns in a different way, and some students need additional help. It is the responsibility of the monolingual teacher to understand these differences and differentiate the

instruction for these students. In Chapter 3, the writer describes the target audience, identifies the procedures for the literacy model, shares her goals for the applied project, and describes the peer assessment.

## Chapter 3

### METHOD

The purpose of this project was to provide a comprehensive literacy model that will be focused on classroom activities and instructional methods to be used during instruction for ESL students. The writer chose this project in order to enhance ESL instruction. While in graduate school, the writer observed several classrooms at various elementary schools. During these observations, it became apparent to the writer that, in the regular classroom, monolingual teachers used the same instruction methods for all students. Only when this writer observed teachers in interaction with students in small pullout group sessions, did she see teachers use instructional methods adapted to the needs of the ESL students and, for the most part, the teacher spoke the student's language. These pullout sessions lasted only 30 minutes to 1 hour, which is not much time to provide tailored instruction. The writer, being monolingual, wanted a better way to address the needs of ESL students than placement of all these students in one small group for undifferentiated instruction. The writer chose to focus on instruction methods for literacy because it is a primary goal in education. In the writer's opinion, if students cannot read, then they cannot complete any content area in education.

#### Target Audience

This comprehensive literacy model is geared toward primary students (K-2); however, the activities and methods can be adjusted to fit higher grade levels. Also, it will be appropriate for those students, who enter fourth grade and are still at a second

grade reading level. The comprehensive literacy model is focused on monolingual teachers in the regular classroom. That said, the model covers all literacy components and can be used by all educators.

### Procedures

The writer began the project with a review of literature on educational methodology. The review is comprised of both primary and secondary sources; however, the writer tried to focus on primary sources in order to provide the reader with raw data. The next stage of this project focuses on the development of the comprehensive literacy model. In order to prepare for the model, the writer completed research on research based methods and activities for ESL students. The model contains the five components of reading (e.g., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) and the sixth component of writing. The model shows educators how to incorporate the research based methods and activities into the classroom on a daily basis.

### Goals of the Applied Project

The primary goal of this project was to provide teachers of ESL students with research based methods and activities and, thereby, improve the educational experience of the ESL student. It is hoped that these improved instructional methods will facilitate the acquisition of literacy for ESL students.

### Peer Assessment

When Chapter 4 was completed, the writer asked several colleagues (e.g., 3-4) to review the comprehensive literacy model and provide informal feedback in regard to what should be added or deleted. The writer provides a summary of the informal feedback in Chapter 5.

## Chapter Summary

The project provides monolingual educators with research based activities and instructional methods to use inside the regular classroom. The activities and methods will help ESL students gain literacy. In Chapter 4, the writer presents the comprehensive literacy model. The model consists of research based instructional activities and methods focused on the five components of reading plus writing. In Chapter 5, the writer discusses what theories and methods contributed to the literacy model. Also, Chapter 5 includes the discussion of the limitations of the project, feedback from colleagues, and recommendations for further development.

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

The applied project is a handbook created to help monolingual teachers teach literacy to English as a second language (ESL) students in a monolingual classroom. The information in the handbook is ideal for ESL students but can also be used with all students. The handbook begins with instructional methods that teachers can employ everyday in their classroom. The handbook continues by giving teachers ideas on specific literacy activities. The activities are broken down by the five components of reading (e. g., phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension) plus writing.



A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHING LITERACY TO ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE  
STUDENTS

by  
Kristen M. Rodgers

## Introduction

This handbook is divided into two parts. The first part provides reminders on the general awareness the teacher should bring to the classroom about the needs of the ESL students (e.g., developmental stages, environmental needs, etc). The second part of the handbook provides a range of methods and activities that can be used inside the classroom on a daily basis and can for the most part be used to the benefit of monolingual students as well. Before using any of these instructional methods and activities, teachers should assess their ESL students (using both formal and informal tools) and use the results of these assessments to guide their instruction (Li & Zhang, 2004).

### Part One: General Awareness

#### *Developmental Stages*

- The four stages that an ESL student will go through in order to develop a second language and adapt culturally in the classroom are: “(1) preproduction, (2) early production, (3) speech emergence, and (4) intermediate fluency” (Ernst-Slavit, Moore, & Maloney, 2002, p. 122-123).
- During the first stage, ESL students will remain silent in the classroom. Allowing ESL students to work through this stage will build trust between the student and the teacher (Ernst-Slavit et al.).
- During the second stage, ESL students will begin to talk and take risks in the classroom. ESL students will also begin to display behaviors of boredom. Teachers need to provide a safe and sensitive environment, and not judge their students (Ernst-Slavit et al.).

- During the third stage, ESL students are able to function in small group settings and are able to comprehend more texts. ESL students also need an environment that values students' cultures and is provided by the teacher in the classroom in order to express themselves (Ernst-Slavit et al.).
- During the fourth stage, ESL students are able to fully understand the content of the lesson. Teachers may now begin to add some direct instruction to their lessons in regards to study skills (Ernst-Slavit et al.).

#### *ESL Needs*

- Provide support for ESL students to show them that they can read when they are struggling to learn English (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003).
- Learn the differences between an ESL student's first language and English (e.g., the alphabet) (Li & Zhang, 2004).
- Work with the school's ESL teacher in order to provide the best instruction for the student (Li & Zhang).
- Instruction for ESL students needs to be just as well rounded as that for monolingual students (Deacon, 2006).
- Create the same high expectations and challenges for ESL students as for monolingual students (Mohr, 2004).
- Support ESL students as much as monolingual students to avoid poor self perception (Fitzgerald, 1993).
- When teaching reading, teachers should teach the main ideas first to help ESL students focus on the content (Fitzgerald).

- Make sure literacy instruction (including read alouds) is provided to ESL students every day; literacy instruction incorporates reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Perotta, 1994).
- Remember that each ESL student is unique and, as such, will learn a second language in a different manner and at a different pace than his or her peers (Ernst-Slavit et al.).
- Set daily routines in place for ESL students and be consistent on terminology used inside the classroom (Kottler & Kottler, 2002).

*Environmental Needs*



- Provide or create opportunities to bring in students' cultures into the classroom (e.g., hang posters, read cultural books, and have guest speakers from other cultures come in to speak to the students) (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Kottler & Kottler, 2002).
- Provide many visuals throughout the classroom, as well as, in the lessons to help students understand the material being presented (Cary, 2004; Kottler & Kottler).

- Create a safe, risk taking environment in the classroom (Fitzgerald, 1993).

Fitzgerald recommends the following ways to create a safe environment:

- Encourage experimentation in reading and writing by allowing students to “play” with language.
- Continually reward ESL learners’ efforts to understand and communicate in reading and writing by praising, smiling, and showing your engagement with their efforts through eye contact and positive facial expression.
- Downplay mistakes made during conversation, oral reading, or writing.
- Be patient. Allow ESL learners plenty of time to read words silently or aloud and to express thoughts orally or in writing.
- If there are other English-speaking students in the class, talk with them about how they can help ESL learners. (p. 646)

## Part Two: Methods and Activities

### *Intervention Model*

- A study conducted by Gerber, Jimenez, Leafstedt, Villaruz, Richards, & English (2004) showed that small group intervention does help ESL students. The model implemented is a Core Intervention Model (CIM). The model is based on direct instruction.
- The CIM is easy to use and has a step-by-step process for implementation. The beginning step is a “supply question with an illustrative item” (Gerber et al., p. 241). The ability to interact at this level is the goal for ESL

students. If an ESL student answers incorrectly, the teacher then steps down and asks a “binary choice” (Gerber et al., p.241) question. This step provides ESL students with optional answers in order to guide their answers. If the ESL student continues to answer incorrectly, then the teacher takes another step down and asks a “model-lead” (Gerber et al., p.241) question. During this step, the teacher models the correct answer for the ESL student. If the ESL student still answers incorrectly, then the teacher continues to the last step and asks a “model-imitation” (Gerber et al., p. 241) question. During this last step, the teacher prompts the ESL student to respond in the same manner as she. Once the ESL student answers correctly during any of the steps, then the teacher immediately moves up to the next type of question.

- The CIM entails a “staircase approach” (Gerber et al., p. 242) which leads ESL students to give correct answers, in turn, this process leaves the ESL student with a positive feeling.

#### *Background Knowledge*

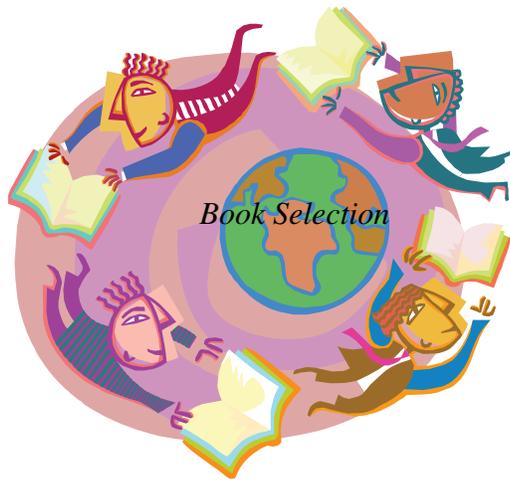
- Activate and include background knowledge of ESL students into your instruction (Chamot & O’Malley, 1994; Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002).
- Be aware of ESL students’ cultural background knowledge to make sure they comprehend the content of the classroom in the way it was meant to be comprehended (Fitzgerald, 1993).

### *Group Instruction*

- Provide small group instruction for ESL students (Gerber et al., 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Kottler & Kottler, 2002).
- Provide an opportunity for ESL students to talk and interact with their peers (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Mohr, 2004).
- Provide opportunities for ESL students to speak in group situations (e.g., yes/no questions or give the student a question the day before so they have time to think about an answer) (Kottler & Kottler).

### *First Language Usage*

- Encourage ESL students to use their first language in the classroom for it will benefit the student in learning a second language (Ernest-Slavit et al., 2002).
- Enable ESL students to use the skills and strategies they have developed in learning their first language to learn a second language (Ernest-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003).
- Allow ESL students to pre-read a book in their first language prior to joining the whole group in reading the same book in English. This will give an ESL student confidence and help them participate in whole group discussion (Ernest-Slavit & Mulhern).
- Allow ESL students to use their first language to support them as they learn to write in a second language (Perotta, 1994).



- Using bilingual books in the mainstream classroom will help ESL students learn a second language (Ernst-Slavit & Mulhern, 2003).
- Give ESL students meaningful books (e.g., books that ESL student can relate to) (Li & Zhang, 2004).
- Use a variety of books such as bilingual, picture, cultural, authentic, and big books (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Mohr, 2004).
- Allen (1994) suggests the following criteria when selecting books for ESL students:
  - Encourage children to choose to read;
  - Help children discover the values and functions of written language;
  - Take into account the children's cultural background;
  - Make use of the children's native languages when possible;
  - Support the children's acquisition of English; and
  - Take into consideration the children's background knowledge. (p. 112)

### *Writing Instruction*

- Give ESL students the opportunity to write,



even before reading occurs. ESL

students have print knowledge and some ESL students will write English before they speak English (Perotta, 1994).

- Remember most ESL students' progress through writing stages like monolingual students (e.g., drawing pictures, writing words, invented spelling, etc.) (Perotta).
- Provide ESL students with activities that have components of both reading and writing (Chamot & O'Malley, 1994; Perotta).
- Allow ESL students the opportunity to share their written work verbally (Perotta).

### *Scaffolding Instruction*

- Teachers should scaffold reading instruction for ESL students (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004).
- Teachers need to break literacy instruction down into: (a) before, (b) during, and (c) after activities (Fitzgerald & Graves; Gibbons, 2002; Kottler & Kottler, 2002; Schifini, 1994).

- Scaffolding reading instruction helps ESL students break down what would be a complex task into small more easily achievable parts (Fitzgerald & Graves).
- Scaffolding is only a temporary process and as ESL students begin to learn and use strategies of their own, teachers should begin to lessen how much they scaffold their instruction (Gibbons).

### Literacy Activities



The following literacy activities are broken down into each component of reading for ease of the reader. Some activities which apply to multiple components are repeated. The writer begins the activities with phonemic awareness, then progresses to phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, and ends with writing. The activities listed not only help ESL students become literate but can also be used on all students in the classroom.

### *Phonemic Awareness*

1. Phonemic awareness rhyming games (e.g., what rhymes with cat?) (Birch, 2002; Deacon, 2006).
2. Phonemic awareness deletion games (e.g., what is cat without the /c/?) (Deacon).

3. Dr. Seuss read aloud (helpful in word play and rhyming) (Birch).



4. Phonemic awareness identity game (e.g., read a sentence slowly to the class and have ESL students put their hand up every time they hear a particular sound) (Birch).
5. Picture clues (used to help ESL students segment words) (Gerber et al., 2004).
  - “In a phoneme segmentation activity, tutors created three-phoneme words using letter cards while showing pictures of the words to ensure understanding. Tutors asked students to identify sounds in words until words were completely segmented (e.g., /s/ /u/ /n/ for “sun”)” (Gerber et al., p. 244).

### *Phonics*

1. Sight words (e.g., place sight words on multi colored cards in the classroom) (Birch, 2002).
2. “Jumbled sentences” (Gibbons, 2002, p. 70). A teacher will write the same sentence twice. The teacher will then cut up one sentence and have ESL students put the cut up sentence back together using the second intact sentence as a guide. This activity shows ESL students how words are spelled and their shape.

3. Word families (e.g., use big books to show ESL students different word families) (Gibbons).
4. Picture clues (used to help ESL students identify onset in words) (Gerber et al., 2004).
  - “Tutors reviewed pictured item names and modeled the activity. Later, tutors asked students to choose a pictured item that did not have the same beginning sound as remaining items” (Gerber et al., p.244).

### *Vocabulary*

1. Role play or act out vocabulary words (e.g., as a new vocabulary word is being read in a book, ESL students stand up and act out the word or the teacher could act out the word as she gives it to the class) (Fitzgerald, 1993; Schirmer, Casbon, & Twiss, 1996).
2. Thematic units (Kottler & Kottler, 2002; Mohr, 2004; Schirmer et al.). A particular piece of curriculum that is used across subject areas. These units reinforce material and vocabulary.
3. Identifying words prior to text (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Fitzgerald & Graves, 2005; Kottler & Kottler; Schirmer et al.). Identifying vocabulary words is a pre-reading activity. This activity allows ESL students to use the vocabulary words multiple times prior to the lesson. This will allow the student to participate more during the lesson.
4. “Prereading conferences” (Farnan, Flood, & Lapp, 1994, p. 141). ESL students meet with a teacher prior to reading a text and similar to number

three, identify vocabulary words. These conferences are more personal than number three.

5. Personalized dictionaries (e.g., have ESL students create their own dictionaries with pictures based on vocabulary words) (Kottler & Kottler).



6. “What did you see” (Gibbons, 2002). A teacher places numerous objects on a table and ESL students get a chance to look at all of them. The teacher then covers up all the objects and students have to remember what the objects were.

### *Fluency*

1. Choral reading time (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Mohr, 2004). ESL students will read out loud in a group at the same time.
2. Reader’s theatre (Cary, 2004; Gibbons, 2002; Mohr). Reader’s theatre helps ESL students develop oral language and fluency. ESL students can perform reader’s theatre from any book including comics.
3. Reading by tape (Birch, 2002; Gibbons). The teacher should provide books that are assisted by a tape (a fluent reader) to which the ESL students listen. Reading by tape will help ESL students pronounce words.

4. “Shadowing” (Birch, p. 103). A teacher can partner an ESL student “with a more advanced reader” (Birch, p. 103). The advanced reader will begin the book first and the ESL reader will follow slightly behind.

### *Comprehension*

1. Multiple activities using comic books (Ranker, 2007).
  - Problem and solution (e.g., locate the problem and the solution of the comic) (Ranker).
  - Adopt a comic. ESL students pick their favorite comic and read it on a regular basis. The students give the class an update on the plot (Cary, 2004).
2. Story retell (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Mohr, 2004).
3. Reading conference (Fitzgerald, 1993). A group of students (can be all ESL students or a mixture from the class) read a book with a teacher and then discuss various questions provided by the teacher.
4. Graphic organizers (e.g., venn diagrams, webs, clusters, and outlines) (Ernst-Slavit et al.; Farnan et al., 1994). A good way to organize ESL students’ thoughts after reading.
5. “Prereading conferences” (Farnan et al., p. 141). ESL students meet with a teacher prior to reading a text and discuss the plot and characters of the book.



## Writing

1. Multiple activities using comic books (Ranker, 2007).
  - Compose a comic. After the class has a read aloud from a comic book, have ESL students compose their own comic strip (Cary, 2004; Ranker).
  - Create a panel. After the class has a read aloud from a comic book, have ESL students add to the story line by creating their own panel (Cary).
  - Understand dialogue. Teachers can use comics to show the difference between the narrative of a text and character dialogue (Ranker).
  - Add dialogue. Give ESL  students a comic strip and take out the dialogue. Have ESL students create their own dialogue (Cary).
2. Writing organizers or graphic organizers (e.g., Venn diagrams, webs, clusters, and outlines) (Ernst-Slavit et al., 2002; Farnan et al., 1994; Gibbons, 2002). A good way to organize ESL students' thoughts prior to writing.
3. "Language Experience Chart" (e.g., a teacher writes one phrase from a predictable book multiple times and the ESL students finish the phrase.) (Mohr, 2004, p. 23). Helps ESL students visually see written language during a read aloud activity.

4. Journals (Cary; Farnan et al.; Fitzgerald, 1993; Gibbons; Kottler & Kottler, 2002; Perotta, 1994). Journals are used as an interaction between the ESL student and the teacher. Journals can also be dialogue journals.

A dialogue journal is a dialogue between the ESL student and the teacher.



The content in a dialogue journal can be anything from what happened in school that day to talking about a book they just read (Fitzgerald; Perotta).

5. “Sound Stories” (Gibbons, p. 107). A teacher will create/develop a tape using three sounds. ESL students will listen to the tape and in a group, will come up with their own stories to the three sounds.

### Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the writer presented the reader with many research based ideas for monolingual teachers to use to teach ESL students in the regular classroom. In Chapter 5, the writer discusses the theories and methods that contributed to the handbook. Also, Chapter 5 includes any limitations of the project, feedback from colleagues, and recommendations for further development.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to develop a handbook for teaching literacy to English as a second language students (ESL) inside monolingual classrooms. It is important that teachers are well informed and are able to teach all their students inside the classroom but it would be foolish to deny the special challenges of teaching ESL students. In a society where a classroom's make-up is very diverse (e.g., ESL, gifted, and special needs), the hope of this project was to educate teachers about methods for dealing with one piece of that diversity. The review of literature presented teachers, not only with the different cultural aspects found inside the classroom, but also, the break down of the five components of literacy and writing. The handbook in Chapter 4 was based on the review of literature. The handbook was sectioned into two parts and integral to part two was a break down of the literacy components. Though divided in two parts, the layout of the handbook was developed to give the reader a more smooth transition from one part to the next. The handbook touched on all components of teaching literacy to ESL students in the classroom.

#### Contribution of the Project

In this project the writer contributed a well researched review of literature that included primary and secondary sources. The review of literature touched on three key points: (1) methodology, (2) classroom environment, and (3) communication with parents. Educating a student is not simply a function of the first point

(methodology) but on all three in order to give that student a well rounded education. Also, this writer contributed a well rounded applied project in Chapter 4. The applied project, a handbook for teachers, was completed using both primary and secondary sources. The handbook presented sections on general awareness, strategies, models, and activities that may be used for the five components of literacy and writing.

#### Limitations

There are two limitations that the writer has observed during the completion of this project. The first limitation was the abundant amount of research available on this topic. This limitation was by no means a bad one but the writer could not use all the information available to her. The second limitation that the writer saw was the lack of primary sources available on this subject. Though abundant, the research on this topic was mostly secondary and the writer would have liked to have more primary sources to include inside the handbook.

#### Peer Assessment Results

The writer had three colleagues review the finished handbook. All three colleagues have worked with ESL students prior to reading this project. All three colleagues liked the handbook and thought the writer did a great job. The first colleague, currently a second grade teacher, also completed her masters on ESL students. The one suggestion that this teacher had was that under the model section the writer should have included the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP model); one of the latest models on how to teach ESL students, by Jana Echevarria, MaryEllen Vogt, and Deborah Short (2000). The second colleague, a third grade teacher, liked all the strategies listed in the handbook; she particularly liked how the writer mentioned that all of the strategies

can be used with all students and not just ESL students. The third colleague, a kindergarten teacher, felt that the writer should have clarified portions of the handbook for the part of its audience comprised of non ESL teachers (e.g., under first language usage, how would a monolingual teacher know if an answer given by an ESL student was correct and relevant if a monolingual teacher cannot understand them because the student is using their first language). This teacher also felt that the recommendations listed in the handbook were thorough and any further research could be completed by the reader depending on their level of need. This teacher felt that the activity section was good and would guide teachers through each category, though she thought the writer could have emphasized even more that these strategies and activities can be used on all students. Finally, in her opinion, the ideas presented were best practices.

#### Recommendations for Further Development

For further study or development, the writer would like to see more primary research on the subject of teaching ESL students. The writer feels that it would be beneficial to begin studying the activities presented in the handbook to see if and by how much they actually help ESL students learn literacy. The writer feels that if more activities are studied, teachers will have a better understanding of what will work in the classroom and what will not. There are many ideas and activities being presented in various books and journal articles but the writer could only find very limited studies to back those ideas and activities.

The writers' second recommendation for further development ties in with the first one. This writer would like to see more materials being produced by teachers who are actually teaching ESL students. It would be invaluable to learn what is or is not working

for them inside the classroom. This kind of insight does not necessarily have to be in the form of a study but instead could simply be basic dialogue amongst colleagues.

### Project Summary

The need for research on the topic of this thesis, how to teach ESL students in a monolingual classroom, will not go away. This research project was written as an attempt to provide knowledge of how to teach ESL students. This research project was well rounded, not just focusing on the students' education but also on how to provide the student with all the necessary components to learn. This writer believes that we, as educators, will always have ESL students in the classroom. This belief is the main reason why this writer feels that this handbook presented in Chapter 4 will be very beneficial to teachers. Teachers cannot hide from the diversity and different languages in their classrooms but teachers can be better prepared to teach.

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