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Teaching English Language Learners in the Regular Elementary Classroom

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TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

IN THE REGULAR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

by

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ABSTRACT

Teaching English Language Learners in the Regular Elementary Classroom

This research project outlines the study of second language acquisition as it relates to English language learners at the elementary level, the history of education for language minority students in the United States, and current trends in education for English language learners in the United States. A practical guide for teaching English language learners in the regular elementary classroom is included, as well as an overview of the presentation of said guide. A discussion, which includes feedback from experts in the field of educating English language learners is also provided.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Linguistic diversity in the United States school system has become a topic of heated debate over the past several years. Educators and administrators advocate varied practices, from teaching limited English proficient students (LEP) in their native languages to strict immersion without support. While legislators and educators attempt to find a resolution, growth of the non-English speaking population increases steadily. In the U.S. alone, there are approximately 48 million people who speak a language other than English at home, 23 million of whom speak English less than "very well" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, p. 3). Because the majority of the U.S. population, as well as the majority of U.S. educators are monolingual, frequently, linguistic diversity in the classroom poses an acute challenge to U.S. educators. The myriad of research, theory, and opinion based literature available to teachers can be confusing and overwhelming. As a result, often, linguistic minority students in the U.S. school system are misunderstood, devalued, or ignored altogether.

Statement of the Problem

With a growing population of English language learners (ELL), both immigrant and otherwise, bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers alone cannot meet the educational needs of such a large population (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Thus, regular classroom teachers are increasingly faced with the task of educating students of different linguistic backgrounds, many of whom have limited or no proficiency in the English language.

This poses a particular challenge to educators who, often, are monolingual English speakers. Many educators cannot relate to being immersed in an unfamiliar language and culture, and they are forced to choose between several inadequate options to address the problem. Educators may attempt to: (a) navigate the plethora of largely opinionated literature in search of support; (b) implement their own methods for teaching students of LEP; or (c) turn a blind eye in the hope that English language learners will eventually pick up the language, culture, and content of the class. Although information on teaching ELL students in the regular classroom is abundant, there is a lack of clear, cohesive, practical guides for teachers.

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this project was to present current and future educators with practical, explicit, research based strategies for their teaching of elementary students in a linguistically diverse setting. The focus of the project and subsequent presentation was about teaching students of LEP in the regular classroom. Through an in depth review of the literature, a comprehensive and realistic guide for teachers was developed for educators, who work with linguistic and cultural diversity at the elementary level.

Chapter Summary

With a large and growing population of ELL students in the U.S. school system, students with LEP are increasingly forced out of specialized instruction and into the mainstream classroom. For millions of elementary school teachers, with no background in linguistically diverse education, this poses a poignant challenge. The purpose of this project was to develop a practical guide for teaching ELL students in the regular classroom. This guide was presented to current and future educators during a seminar in 2007.

In Chapter 2, a review of literature was presented to provide information on three

major topics which relate to teaching English language learners in the regular classroom. These were: (a) second language acquisition (SLA), (b) the history of education for linguistic minorities, and (c) current trends. In Chapter 3, the method, target audience, procedures and goals, and peer assessment were described, as well as the peer assessment.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The purpose of this project was to develop and present a comprehensive guide for teachers. The focus of the guide is for those who teach in a linguistically diverse setting. It provides practical strategies that can be used to make content comprehensible to English language learners.

The majority of children in the world learn to speak at least two languages (Clark, 2000). Bilingualism appears in most countries, and across socioeconomic status as well as across age groups. In the United States alone, there are an estimated 3.2 million school age children of limited English proficiency (LEP), and this number continues to grow (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2000, as cited in Salinas, 2006).

In the following review of the literature, three major topics were explored. These are: (a) second language acquisition, (b) the history of education for language minority students, and (c) current trends.

Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition (SLA) is studied for many reasons, including its practical implications (Pienemann, 1995). On the basis of SLA patterns, a teacher is able to evaluate students' current level of SLA, and tailor his or her teaching to the student's zone of proximal development. It is important to know what a child is capable of learning at each point in time. By knowing this, a teacher can adapt the syllabus and teaching style to suit the level of the student. The study of SLA is essential if educators are to successfully guide students through their acquisition of English.

In addition, it is important to point out the difference between language acquisition and language learning (Krashen, 1981). Language learning is the formal process by which students are taught the: (a) vocabulary, (b) grammar, (c) conventions, and (d) rules of the target language. Consciously, students learn language in the order that it is taught, and the focus is on correctness, as opposed to communication. In contrast, language acquisition is the form of learning that takes place subconsciously while the learner participates in meaningful interaction in the target language. The focus of language acquisition is communication, and correctness is less important.

There is a fairly stable order of language acquisition. Brown (1973) and Dulay and Burt (1975, both cited in Krashen, 1981) found that, with some degree of certainty, it can be predicted which language structures tend to be acquired early and which tend to be acquired late. Therefore, the study of SLA is focused on the learner, not the teacher (Krashen; Yule, 1996).

Myths and Facts

There are some commonly held beliefs that may corrupt one's perceptions of how students learn to speak English. It is important to dispel these myths so that educators can move forward with more viable and useful information.

Myth One: The Second Language Is Learned in Contrast to the First

It is a common belief that second language learners base their learning of a second language on their knowledge of the first (Lado, 1957, as cited in Krashen, 1981). In this way, students learn the second language *in contrast* to the first (Krashen; Pienemann, 1995). For example, a native (L1) Spanish speaker might produce the following sentence: "Take it from the side inferior" (Yule, 1996, p. 194). Because, in Spanish, inferior means lower, and adjectives are placed after the noun that they describe; this

person constructed a sentence that fits his or her L1 structure. When this learner changes the sentence to fit the appropriate English (L2) structure and vocabulary, this person is said to be learning to speak English. Thus, it was believed that the student learns the second language *in contrast* to his or her first language.

Although this belief is true to some extent, it is one thing to say that the first language influences the learning of the second, and quite another to say that the second language is learned in contrast to the first (Krashen, 1981; Pienemann, 1995). However, as is apparent in the above example, the first language has an influence on the learning of the second, and, often, the skills and grammatical rules that apply in a person's L1 do not transfer to his or her L2. First language influence is strongest in word order (Krashen). Errors in word order might include incorrect adjective placement, such as “the cat old.” First language influence is weakest in bound morphology, such as subject/verb agreement and plural nouns. In settings where natural acquisition takes place (i.e., as opposed to formal language teaching), the influence of the first language is minimal. It appears that the first language may interfere with the second when the student tries to produce the second language but has not acquired enough of the language to do so. However, this occurs less often when language is naturally acquired.

Myth Two: Practice Makes Perfect

Another common belief about SLA is that practice makes perfect. The renouncing of this myth is imperative if the study of SLA is to be of use in the field of teaching. According to Pienemann (1995),

> While practise is absolutely necessary to achieve a certain level of skill in the use of a language, it does not necessarily guarantee that the skill will be acquired. The learner might be practising things which he or she is not ready to learn at that particular point in time. (p. 12)

This statement reiterates the importance of learning about the stages of SLA so that teachers can identify at which stage their students are and modify their teaching to meet the needs of the students.

Myth Three: Errors Must Be Corrected as Soon as Possible

Often, in traditional teaching, it is accepted that errors should be corrected as soon as possible to avoid setting patterns that will be difficult to rectify later (Pienemann, 1995). However, in SLA, "Correction, whether it is systematic or random, does not seem to be effective in enhancing the acquisition of the corrected structure" (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, p. 43).

First, when every error is corrected, it prevents the student from feeling relaxed in speaking the second language (Pienemann, 1995). When students feel self-conscious, they are less likely to concentrate on the content of their speaking because they become preoccupied with the form and grammar of the second language. Indeed, Yule (1996) cited studies which were conducted with adults that advocated "French with cognac" or "Russian with vodka" (p. 192). The addition of alcohol removes some of the self-consciousness that inhibits the use of second languages and can be beneficial to a point. However, usually, inhibition returns with sobriety.

The second reason that errors should not necessarily be corrected always is that errors may not be a reflection of a bad learning habit, but can demonstrate whether, and how, the learner reconstructs the second language in his or her own mind (Pienemann, 1995). Because learning is actively constructed (Nieto, 1999), such errors are simply examples of how one reconstructs his or her learning. An example of an error that results from creative reconstruction is when an English language learner uses the word, "goed," for "went" (Pienemann, 1995) or, "womans", for "women" (Yule, 1996). The learner, who uses these words, shows that he or she is familiar with the correct past tense and

plural inflectional endings (i.e., -ed and -s, respectively), but have over generalized these rules. Errors such as these are common in the beginning stages of second language development and usually begin to disappear with more exposure to the L2 (Pieneman, 1995).

Although teachers need not, indeed should not, correct every error made by ELL students (Krashen, 1981), it must be said that these errors should be addressed in the later stages of second language development, when the learner is at the appropriate stage of SLA (Pienemann, 1995). This is important because, although such errors do not change the meaning of the expression, the speaker is more likely to be judged as lacking intelligence if he or she uses too many of these features.

Stages of Second Language Acquisition

Although there is great variation between individuals, as well as variation between people who learn a second language early in life and those who learn a second language later, typically, people follow a general pattern of SLA (Clark, 2000; Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Krashen, 1981; Krashen, Scarcella, & Long, 1982; Pienemann, 1995). According to Dulay et al., "All over the world, children who are learning their first language during early childhood use similar kinds of verbal constructions and make the same kinds of grammatical mistakes" (p. 7). Although the rate at which children and adults acquire a second language varies greatly, the way children and adults learn any language, first or second, follows a similar pattern (Clark; Dulay et al.; Krashen; Krashen et al; Pienemann).

Although the exact contents of each phase of SLA acquisition vary among researchers, the general trend is the same. For example, Pienemann (1995) promoted the idea of six stages of SLA, whereas Krashen (1981) and Dulay et al. (1982) refer to four groups of language structures, preceded by a silent phase. However, both trends follow

the same general pattern of acquisition.

The first stage of SLA is commonly referred to as a silent phase (Dulay et al., 1982; Krashen, 1981). During this period, students absorb the language spoken in a naturalistic setting for use in later stages of SLA. According to Dulay et al., "Delaying oral practice or observing a silent period until learners are ready to speak in the new language are beneficial practices" (p. 42). During this stage, learners may begin to produce single words and formulae (Pienemann, 1995). Formulae can be described as a string of words that conveys a single meaning, much like an individual word might. For example, a learner in stage one might say, "How are you?" Although the learner does not necessarily understand how to use the different forms of "to be" and the systematic copula inversion that pertains to questions; nevertheless, the speaker understands that the phrase is used as a greeting, and usually elicits a pleasant response. Krashen referred to these utterances as prefabricated patterns. They are partly memorized, partly creative sentences. For example, a learner might memorize the words, "I have," and creatively input the appropriate noun.

The type of formulae described by Pienemann (1995) is closely related to the first group of language structures described by Dulay et al. (1982). Group 1 consists of case (i.e., nomitive and accusative) and simple declarative sentences that use correct word order.

Stage 2 of SLA is related mostly to the subject/verb/object (SVO) sequence (Pienemann, 1995). In this stage, most utterances take the SVO form. To illustrate, a statement such as "He is here" is converted into a question, "He is here?" Questions lack appropriate copula inversion (e.g., changing the places of the subject and verb). Also, the phrase is negated by the addition of a negative, "No, he is here." In addition, rule overgeneralizations common to Stage 2 of SLA include the -ed, -ing, and plural -s

inflectional endings. Pienemann termed these inflectional endings, morphology.

Group 2 of the language structures described by Krashen (1981) and Dulay et al. (1982) include the singular copula as well. In addition, Group 2 includes: (a) the plural auxiliary (e.g., are); (b) singular auxiliary (e.g., ‘s and s), and; (c) the progressive tense (e.g., -ing). The singular auxiliary is common to Group 2 as described by Dulay et al. and Stage 4 as described by Pienemann (1995).

The use and overuse of the three inflectional endings described in Stage 2 of SLA are common to Stage 3 as well (Pienemann, 1995). In addition, Stage 3 is marked by four syntactic additions to the second language. The first is topicalization, in which the topic of the sentence is placed first, as in “Alex I love.” The second common syntax is called do-fronting. This means the addition of the word, do, to subjective interrogative sentences, such as “Do he come to the party?” The third is called adverb fronting. This is when the speaker places the adverb at the beginning of the sentence, as in “Quickly we go” or “Today he stay here.” The fourth and final common syntax used in Stage 3 of SLA is to add a simple negative to a verb to make the sentence negative. An example of this is, “He don't come.”

Dulay et al. (1982) described the third phase or group as containing five aspects of the second language. These aspects of language are: (a) past irregular (e.g., He went); (b) conditional auxiliary (e.g., I would like to go); (c) possessive (e.g., Victoria‘s toy); (d) long plural (e.g., horses); and (e) third person singular (e.g., He eats lunch).

Stage 4 of SLA involves the appropriate copula inversion between statements and questions (Pienemann, 1995). Also, it may be marked by overgeneralization of the copula inversion rule as it relates to indirect questions such as, “I wonder where is he?” In addition, Pienemann claimed that, in Stage 4, the learner gains the possessive -s (e.g.,“the cat's toy”) and appropriate use of the plural -s (e.g., “two cats”). This relates

directly to the language structures in Group 3, as described by Dulay et al. (1982).

Stage 5 is marked by the use of "do" in the second place, whether it be in statements, questions, or negative statements (Pienemann, 1995). Examples of these are as follows: (a) "He does that well," (b) "Why did he try it?" and (c) "She does not do that."

The sixth and final stage involves the appropriate use of copula inversion, including indirect questions, such as "I wonder where it is" and "I asked her what it was" (Pienemann, 1995). Also implied in Stage 6 of SLA is the appropriate use of the preceding syntax and morphologies.

The fourth and final group of language structures described by Dulay et al. (1982) are the perfect auxiliary (e.g., have) and past participle (e.g., -en). An example that uses both of these structures is as follows: "I have seen this before."

Although knowledge about the stages of second language development has enhanced teaching techniques, the acceptance of the stages limits what and when English language learners can be taught (Pienemann, 1995). Because each step in the process is systematic and sequential, it is not possible for learners to skip any stage of language development.

Effects of Age on Second Language Acquisition

Krashen (1981), Krashen, Scarcella, and Long (1982), Lenneberg (1967) and Scovel (1969; both cited in Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004) supported the idea that there is a period of time, usually discussed in terms of age, in a person's life when the brain is better able to acquire language, both first and second. After this critical period, eventual attainment in SLA is weakened. According to Dulay et al. (1982), "The belief that children are better at language acquisition than adults is supported by both scientific and anecdotal evidence" (p. 78).

Critical Period Hypothesis

Danesi (1994) cited Lenneberg (1967), who pioneered the theory that there is a biological period during which a child develops his or her language abilities. This critical period hypothesis (CPH) was proposed by Lenneberg to be the period from birth to puberty, and originally referred to the acquisition of a first language (Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004; Krashen, 1981). According to Lenneberg, if the onset of language acquisition occurs after the approximate age of 12, when the left and right hemispheres of the brain have developed specialized functions, complete mastery of the language is no longer possible, due to these changes in cerebral plasticity (Dulay et al., 1982).

Sensitive Period

This CPH encouraged subsequent researchers to reach similar conclusions. In the 1970s, Krashen conducted a neuroscientific study of language acquisition, from which he concluded that the most advantageous age range for SLA was limited to the first 5 years of life (Krashen & Harshman, 1972, as cited in Danesi, 1994). Further studies by Lamendella supported this evidence (Selinker & Lamendella, 1978, as cited in Danesi). However, Krashen extended this interpretation to incorporate a *sensitive* period with reference to SLA. He concluded that, after this sensitive period ends at the age of about 14, the acquisition of a second language is still possible, but not to the extent of being able to attain native like competence (Krashen et al., 1982). Children under 10 who learn a second language in a naturalistic setting nearly always attain native like proficiency, while those over 15 rarely do (Dulay et al., 1982).

Subsequently, Scovel (1988, as cited in Danesi, 1994) narrowed the idea of the sensitive period and limited its application to the acquisition of pronunciation only. Scovel's theory was focused on neurological muscular development, which affects only phonology (Scovel, 1988, as cited in Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004).

Optimal Age

Cenoz (2001), in her study of English as a third language, found that older students (e.g., who began learning English in the sixth grade at age 11) scored notably higher in the areas of: (a) oral production (e.g., vocabulary, grammar, fluency, and content); (b) composition (e.g., content, organization, vocabulary, and language use), and (c) listening. Also, these types of findings were acknowledged in a meta-analysis conducted by Krashen et al., (1982). Younger students, who began learning English in the third grade at age 8, and who had been exposed to the same number of hours of instruction, scored notably higher in only one area: pronunciation (Cenoz).

Cenoz (2001) presented several possible explanations for this. One explanation was that perhaps the different methods of teaching between the two age groups was responsible for the difference in areas of strength. According to Dulay et al. (1982), "the language environment typically provided for adult second language learners tends to be impoverished in the natural communication and the concrete referents which foster subconscious language learning" (p. 78). Traditional approaches such as these could explain older children's higher scores on written tests, whereas the oral based approach used with younger students could explain their higher scores in oral pronunciation (Cenoz). A second explanation for the disparity was the difference in cognitive maturity between the two groups.

Similarly, Yumoto (1984), in his case studies of two Japanese boys learning English, found that the sensitive period for pronunciation lies in early childhood, also, but he proposed that a certain degree of cognitive maturity is necessary to grasp the structure and grammar of a second language as was found by Cenoz (2001). Therefore, Yumoto concluded that the optimal age for learning a second language is from the fourth to sixth grade of elementary school.

Yule (1996) maintained that the optimal age for learning a second language is in adolescence. However, Yule supported older adolescence (e.g., age 10-16), “when the 'flexibility' of the language acquisition faculty has not been completely lost, and the maturation of cognitive skills allows a more effective 'working out' of the regular features of the L2 encountered” (p. 192).

Although it is clear that both children and adults are able to learn a second language, numerous researchers (Lenneberg, 1967; Scovel, 1969; both cited in Abu-Rabia & Kehat, 2004; Cenoz, 2001; Dulay et al., 1982; Krashen, 1981; Krashen et al., 1982; Yumoto, 1984; Yule, 1996) indicated that the ultimate acquisition of a second language is, indeed, influenced by age of the learner. According to Dulay et al.,

> age of arrival [the age at which learners begin to acquire a second language] is a powerful determinant of ultimate success in accent acquisition, and all confirm that puberty is an important turning point with respect to this aspect of language learning. (p. 81)

Brain Research

It is generally accepted that the left hemisphere of the brain controls the functions of language in adults (Dulay et al., 1982; Yumoto, 1984). However, Yumoto cited Seliger (1982), who found that each hemisphere of the brain is responsible for different aspects of language. The left hemisphere, which was traditionally thought of as the only side involved in language, is in control of the intellectual and analytic aspects of language. In contrast, the right hemisphere is said to be involved in pattern recognition and holistic processing.

Although the left side of the brain dominates linguistic performance in most adults (Dulay et al., 1982; Krashen, 1981), the right side of the brain develops before the left (Yumoto, 1984). Certain aspects of language are lateralized to the left at birth, but others develop in the right hemisphere before this lateralization is complete (e.g., around puberty; Krashen). By age 5, however, most aspects of language processing are

lateralized to the left hemisphere at the adult level. Lenneberg (1967, as cited in Dulay et al., 1982) found that, when the left hemisphere is removed from an adult, total loss of language results. In children, this does not occur.

Because the right side of the brain develops before the left, different strengths in language ability develop as a result of the age at which a person first begins to learn or acquire a second language (Yumoto, 1984). When children develop a second language in conjunction with the pattern recognizing, holistic processing, right hemisphere, the result is correct pronunciation and an authentic accent. However, once the child's phonological system of the first language is firmly established, and the right hemisphere is fully developed, an older child tends to speak the second language with the accent of the first. Instead, these older children rely on their intellectual, analytic capacities of the left hemisphere for their learning of the second language. These capacities facilitate the learning of all aspects of the second language except pronunciation. Cenoz (2001) cited Snow and Hoefnagel-Hohle (1977), who performed studies in naturalistic settings which indicated that, although older students present an initial advantage in second and third language learning, younger students are often able to *catch up*, and have the added advantage of an authentic accent.

Two Systems of Bilingualism

Differences in cognitive development lead to differences in the bilingual systems that second language learners employ (Yumoto, 1984). Two such systems exist: coordinate and compound.

According to Yumoto (1984), usually, the coordinate system is used by older bilingual children, and it is the essential element for successful code-switching (e.g., switching between languages contingent on the audience). Older second language

learners can easily distinguish two distinct language systems and switch between the two in different contexts. The explanation for this lies in the assumption that older learners have firmly established their first language prior to learning the second and are able to look at the second analytically (e.g., use of the left side of the brain). This leads to a separation of the two languages.

In general, the compound system is used by younger bilingual students, who tend to establish a single, merged language (Yumoto, 1984). In the compound system, two languages fuse and are used interchangeably during the same event. This is largely due to the idea that younger second language learners learn both languages somewhat simultaneously, during a time when the right, pattern forming, holistic learning side of the brain is developing. Thus, younger learners form a single, fused language. Consequently, if the first language is not used often, the younger child is more likely to lose his or her first language.

History of Education for Language Minority Students

Because of the unclear wording in the Fourteenth Amendment of 1865 which guarantees all citizens the right to "life, liberty, and property" (Cornell Law School, n.d., p. 1), many federal and state laws have been passed to establish as well as limit specialized education for nonEnglish speakers in the U.S. However, generally, the history of education, in respect to linguistic diversity, has moved in the direction of accommodation for and sensitivity to language minority students.

It should be noted that education is a State Constitutional right, but not a Federal Constitutional right (Nieto, 1999). With respect to bilingual education, Federal law provides only for *transitional* bilingual education. In addition, Federal law provides training for educators, parental participation in program planning, and federal assistance in the areas of training and finance, but it is fairly nonspecific as to the actions that school

district administrators must take.

Social History

The issue of immigration is not new to the U.S. There were four major waves of migration that formed this country (Brisk, 1981). The first major wave was from Asia. These were the people who came to be known as the Native Americans. The second wave was from Europe and consisted of the people who colonized the U.S. The next wave consisted of imported slaves from Africa. The final major migration wave occurred after U.S. independence and came from a variety of countries including Eastern Europe and Mexico. The main focus of the following section is on the last of these immigration waves when school and law became more intertwined.

Throughout most of the 19th Century, multilingual education was pervasive in schools (Brisk, 1981; Ryan, 2002). Because U.S. immigrants, mainly those of Dutch, German, and French descent, held economic and political power, teaching English as a second language was commonplace (Brisk). In general, the students' native language was used as the language of instruction, or as a complement to English instruction in many schools (Ryan). The period before American Independence, until the year 1880, was known as the Permissive Period (Utah State Office of Education, 2006).

From the 1880s until the first World War, a large wave of immigration came from Eastern and Southern Europe, as well as Mexico (Brisk, 1981). The difference in cultures between a mainly Western European society and the new immigrants became apparent in language, appearance, and culture. Many believe that this caused xenophobia in the U.S. and prompted the subsequent switch to instruction in English only. During that time, the Industrial Revolution, there was a need for one common, economically unifying language, which may have been motivation for the change. Whatever the

original motivation, the states initiated many Americanization programs, which were represented by the idea of the "melting pot" (Brisk, p. 6), and English only instruction was mandated in schools in 34 states (Utah State Office of Education, 2006). Many states began to outlaw the teaching of foreign languages in schools as well (Brisk).

Legislative History

Meyer v. Nebraska

The Restrictive Period ended in 1923, and education entered its Opportunistic Period in regard to multilingual education in the U.S. (Utah State Office of Education, 2006). Before 1923, Nebraska, along with several other states, had restricted all foreign language instruction in schools before the completion of the eighth grade. Justice McReynolds, who delivered the opinion of the Supreme Court (1919, as cited in University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law, n. d.), stated that the purpose of the law was "that the English language should be and become the mother tongue of all children reared in this state" (p. 1). A prominent case in 1923 overturned this decision. In *Meyer v. Nebraska,* a teacher brought his case before the Supreme Court when he was found guilty of teaching German to a student who had not yet completed the eighth grade. The Supreme Court declared that the Nebraska prohibition of teaching foreign language in schools was unconstitutional.

Civil Rights Act of 1964

John F. Kennedy initiated the Civil Rights Act of 1964 during his term in office, but was assassinated before the law was passed by Congress (Nash & Jeffrey, 2004). In 1964, Lyndon B. Johnson pushed the Civil Rights Act through Congress as a memorial to President Kennedy. The Act outlawed racial discrimination in all public accommodations and authorized the Justice Department to act with greater authority in school matters. This was a huge step in the direction of multilingual education, as it was

the final implementation and enforcement of the Fourteenth Amendment. Title VI under the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in all federally funded programs and activities (U.S. Department of Justice, 2003). Although it does not prescribe a specific type of program, the Office for Civil Rights issued a set of guidelines, called Compliance Recommendations, to help school district officials to effectively serve students of LEP (Gittins, 2001). Title VI was the basis for the most important case in linguistically diverse education.

Lau v. Nichols

The *Lau v. Nichols* case was the most important case to reach the Supreme Court in the history of linguistically diverse education (Fischer, Schimmel, & Stellman, 1999). In 1970, there were approximately 3,000 students of Chinese ancestry in the San Fransisco Unified School District, who spoke little or no English. The majority of these received no special services to meet their educational needs. These students and their parents filed suit in a federal court, and claimed that their Fourteenth Amendment rights had been violated, as well as their rights under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The main argument was whether students, who could not understand English, were being denied an equal education in classes taught only in English.

The Supreme Court ruled in favor of the students in regard to the school district denial of services to such students as discrimination (Fischer et al., 1999). The Court held that, when there are no efforts being made to teach English, "students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education" (p. 367). Furthermore, the Court ruled that "Schools are not free to ignore the need of limited English speaking children for language assistance to enable them to participate in the instructional program of the district" (p. 367). Because the ruling was by the Supreme Court, it extended to all schools in the country who were in violation of the Civil Rights

Act of 1964 (Brisk, 1981). However, no specific remedies were ever ratified. The *Lau* case redefined the foundation of legal thought in regard to LEP students and their education (Ryan, 2002).

Equal Educational Opportunity Act

Pursuant to the *Lau v. Nichols* ruling, Congress passed the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (the Act), which made the governmental expectation of schools more specific in reference to linguistic minorities (Fischer et al., 1999). Enacted in 1974, it is stated:

> No state shall deny equal opportunity to an individual on account of...race, color, sex, or national origin, by. . . the failure by an educational agency to take appropriate action to overcome language barriers that impede equal participation by its students in the instructional programs. (p. 368)

Although the Act further clarified the responsibilities of schools, in regard to linguistic minorities, at this time, there were still no specific actions mandated by the courts.

Castaneda v. Pickard

A subsequent Supreme Court case in 1981, the *Castaneda v. Pickard* was based on the Equal Educational Opportunity Act (Fischer et al., 1999). The case prompted the development of a three part test to define and determine the appropriate action mandated by the Equal Educational Opportunity Act. The test required the following to determine whether district actions were appropriate in regard to Equal Educational Opportunity: (a) a sound basis in educational theory, (b) achievement of results in overcoming language barriers that confront LEP students, and (c) effective implementation of the theory (Ryan, 2002).

Bilingual Education Act

The Bilingual Education Act of 1968 was the first piece of Federal legislation created with the exclusive purpose to support LEP students (Ryan, 2002). A second

Bilingual Education Act was passed in 1974, reaffirmed in 1988, and continued in 1994 (New Jersey Department of Education, 2006). The law provides financial assistance to local districts for the design and implementation of programs that will sufficiently meet the needs of LEP students and to assure compliance with state and federal regulations. In addition, it specifies that bilingual education programs be developed in conjunction with the parents of LEP students (Fischer et al., 1999). It seems clear that the intention of the law is to integrate LEP students whenever possible and to separate such students only during special instruction.

Propositions 227 and 203

California Proposition 227 (i.e., the Proposition) of 1998 was a step in the opposite direction with regard to bilingual education (California Secretary of State, 1998). Proposition 227, commonly referred to as English for the Children, was initiated by software magnate and former gubernatorial candidate Ron Unz (Mora, 2003). With 61% general voter support, but only 37% Hispanic American voter support, the Proposition effectively banned bilingual education and greatly limited English as a Second Language (ESL) instruction in the state of California (Ryan, 2002; Mora, 2003). In place of bilingual education and ESL, California officials proposed a maximum of 1 year of intensive sheltered English immersion before English language learners are mainstreamed. Parents and guardians can exempt their students from the program if they: (a) have special needs, (b) are already proficient in English, or (c) would learn English faster through alternate instructional techniques (California Secretary of State).

Before the passage of Proposition 227, 25-30% of the California school age population was classified as English Language Learners (ELL). Of the ELL population, 30% participated in bilingual programs, and the average length of participation was 3

years (Mora, 2003; Cummins, 2006). Taking into account the dropout rate for Hispanic Americans in California, these statistics indicate that bilingual education accounted for the education of approximately 4% of Hispanic American students.

Since the implementation of Proposition 227, there has been a 2.5% increase in reclassification of students from LEP to Fluent; second grade reading has increased by 9% and mathematics by 14% (Mora, 2003). However, these statistics coincided with a decrease in the California second grade class size by one-third as well as a return to phonics from whole language learning (Ryan, 2002). In addition, this is consistent with a trend that began in 1990, 8 years before the passage of Proposition 227 (Mora), so it is difficult to attribute these gains to any one factor. A similar proposition was enacted in Arizona in 2000 and Massachusetts in 2002.

Current Trends

Today there are three main methods that can be used to accommodate students of limited language proficiency. However, each of these methods has numerous models for implementation.

1. Immersion, whereby educators teach all subjects, including English language, in English.
2. The English as a Second Language (ESL) model, whereby students are immersed and effectively mainstreamed throughout the day, except for a period of time set aside for English language instruction.
3. Bilingual education, whereby students are taught subject matter in both English and their native language, and English language classes are included.

Immersion

Often, the method of immersion for SLA has been described with the use of water

metaphors and, frequently, the term is used interchangeably with *submersion* (Crawford, 2004). Immersion has been referred to as the *sink or swim* method. Pratt (as cited in Crawford), who founded a system of boarding schools for Native Americans in the 19th Century, said, "I believe in immersing the Indians in our civilization and, when we get them under, holding them there until they are thoroughly soaked" (p. 33). Immersion in this sense has less to do with teaching, and more to do with forcing learners to adapt. This practice was common before the *Lau v. Nichols* case (Fischer et al., 2003) and has since been prohibited by the rulings for that case.

However, less brutal and more effective forms of immersion exist in schools today (Crawford, 2004). Sheltered instruction is a common practice within immersion. Some commonly used methods for sheltered instruction include: (a) adjustment of one's speech, (b) pre-teaching vocabulary, or (c) the use of graphic organizers.

Structured English Immersion (SEI), also known as Sheltered English Immersion, is widely used for teaching English learners (Echevarria et al., 2004). This method is defined by two criteria:

1. English is used and taught at a level appropriate to the class of English learners (that's different from the way English is used in the mainstream classroom), and
2. teachers are oriented toward maximizing instruction in English and use English for 70% to 90% of instructional time, averaged over the first three years of instruction (Baker, 1998, p.199)

Depending upon its implementation, the use of SEI has been both successful and ineffective in schools in the U.S. (Ryan, 2002). However, immersion is generally a subtractive method to integrate students, meaning that it does not support the students' native language, which is a detriment to the students' culture and ultimate learning (Nieto, 1999).

English as a Second Language

In the first half of the 20th Century, most ESL instruction consisted of direct

instruction or grammar translation (Echevarria et al., 2004). However, in many schools, the move was toward content based ESL classes, in which students were taught by teachers whose main goal is English language accuracy and fluency, but whose secondary goal is to prepare students for the regular classroom. Often, this type of ESL includes the use of sheltered instruction. Although sheltered instruction is a necessary element of content based ESL, it is employed in many immersion and bilingual programs as well.

There are several models of ESL instruction (Crawford, 2004). The most common of these is the ESL pullout model, where students are pulled out of their classrooms to attend self-contained classrooms for formal instruction in English language. These sessions usually last 30-40 minutes and are conducted in small groups with a specially trained, certified teacher. This method, too, is subtractive and focuses on English fluency. Because the majority of the day is spent in the regular classroom, this type of ESL program encompasses both ESL and immersion.

English Language Development (ELD) and Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English (SDAIE) are specific types of content based approaches to ESL (Crawford, 2004). In ELD, beginning English speakers are pulled out of their classrooms and taught with the primary goal of learning English. When these students become proficient in English language, they move on to SDAIE, another pullout model whose primary goal is academic development.

Bilingual Education

In bilingual schools, students are provided with a natural setting in which to practice a second language for the purpose of communication. According to Dulay et al. (1982), "Students who are exposed to natural language, where the focus is on communication, perform better than those in a formal environment, where focus is on the

conscious acquisition of linguistic rules or the manipulation of linguistic forms" (p. 42). Bilingual education encompasses immersion as well as ESL.

Currently, three types of programs for bilingual education are most common (Cummins, 2006).

1. Second language immersion programs serve native English speakers and use a language other than English to teach at least 50% of the curriculum during the elementary or secondary grades.
2. Developmental bilingual programs, sometimes called late-exit transitional programs, serve language minorities and use the students' native language for close to 50% of instruction time during the elementary grades, reduced to 25-50% by the end of elementary school. Transitional bilingual programs are similar, but students spend an average of 2 years less in these classes (Crawford, 2004).
3. Two-way immersion, or dual language programs combine immersion and developmental bilingual programs and serve both minority and majority language students. There are two major models: (a) 90/10, where the majority of instructional time is devoted to the minority language during the early grades; and (b) 50/50, where instructional time is split equally between the two languages.

Whitelaw-Hill (1995) argued against bilingual education because of its limited effectiveness in comparison to the ESL method. She argued that the use of bilingual education fails to prepare students for mainstream classrooms. Over a 3 year period, beginning in kindergarten, LEP students in New York and California were taught in one of two ways: (a) some attended bilingual schools where most subjects were taught in their native language; and (b) others attended mainstream classrooms where classes were

taught in English, and an English instruction (ESL) class was provided in addition. Of the students involved in the ESL program, 79% tested out and were mainstreamed within 3 years. Of those involved in the bilingual program, only 51% tested out and mainstreamed in the same time period. Whitelaw-Hill suggested that second language learning and content mastery are not mutually exclusive, but compatible.

However, Nieto (1999) disagreed and held the view that maintenance and affirmation of students' cultures and languages fosters learning. According to Crawford (2004), “Transitional [bilingual] programs are generally equal or superior in academic outcomes to any of the all-English models but inferior to other bilingual approaches” (p. 43). This view supports bilingual education. In addition, Dolson (1985, as cited in Nieto) described the difference between additive and subtractive bilingual homes. In an additive home, the family continues to speak their native language while they learn English. In a subtractive home, the family opts to speak English only in the home. Also, the terms additive and subtractive, apply to school settings (Crawford). Dolson found that students from additive homes academically outperformed those from subtractive homes. Nieto supported this idea and maintained that the addition of a second language helps to develop metalinguistic awareness, which is a greater understanding of how language itself works. This awareness can then help students use language for further learning.

Although, in theory, bilingual education is the most successful model of education for language minority students, often, problems in practice arise (Crawford, 2004). For example, often, there is a shortage of fully bilingual and biliterate teachers to teach bilingual programs, especially when LEP students come from diverse backgrounds, or they speak languages that are not commonly taught in the U.S. such as Hmong, Gujarati, or Serbo-Croatian. In these cases, structured English immersion may be the best option

that can be provided. Thus, discrepancies arise between theory and practice.

Chapter Summary

To better understand the experience of linguistic minorities in the regular classroom, it is important to review the research and literature on SLA in order to become familiar with the acquisition process. In addition, it is imperative for educators to be aware of the past and present of law and policies in regard to teaching English language learners in the regular classroom. In Chapter 2, many aspects of SLA were discussed, and a brief history of education for linguistic minorities was reviewed. In addition, current trends for teaching English language learners were explored. In Chapter 3, the method, target audience, procedures, goals, and a peer assessment were described.

Chapter 3

METHOD

The purpose of this project was to develop and present a resource guide for current and future teachers to use as a tool for teaching English language learners (ELL) in the regular classroom. With a large and growing population of students who are less than fully fluent in the English language, highly qualified teachers, who are trained in teaching English or teaching linguistically diverse students, are unable to meet the demand for specialized education. Therefore, students of limited English proficiency (LEP) are increasingly present in the regular classroom. Most teachers in the United States are monolingual, and they lack personal and professional experience with linguistic diversity in the classroom. Through thorough research, a practical, explicit, comprehensive guide for teachers was developed for educators who work with linguistic and cultural diversity at the elementary level.

Target Audience

This project was designed for application with students at the elementary level (i.e., Grades K-6). However, many of the strategies and recommendations are generalizable to the general population of ELL students.

The project was presented at a 2007 Summer seminar for teacher education students. The teacher education students who attended this seminar were both graduate and undergraduate students, and had varying levels of teaching experience. Teacher education students who anticipate working with a linguistically diverse student population should be interested in this project, as will current teachers who seek more effective strategies of teaching the ELL students in their classrooms.

Goals and Procedures

The goal of this project was to provide current and future educators with clear and practical strategies for teaching in a linguistically diverse setting. It is this researcher's expectation that teachers who attended this presentation went away with user friendly strategies that can be implemented on a daily basis with students of varying linguistic backgrounds and levels of English proficiency.

Within this resource guide, strategies and best practices are reviewed, and the rationale and research behind such strategies are briefly highlighted. In addition, examples of these strategies in action are described within the text of the guide and were modeled during its presentation.

Peer Assessment

Assessment of the resource guide was obtained from four experts in the area of teaching English language learners. These experts consist of a seventh year bilingual first and second grade teacher, two retired adult ESL teachers who provided feedback collaboratively, and a veteran teacher who has experience in teaching ESL, bilingual elementary, and linguistically diverse students in the regular classroom. Two of these experts drew on experience from the public school system, and two from a local community college. Feedback was provided on an assessment form and by written comments and suggestions written or typed on the document itself.

In addition to peer evaluations, a feedback form was distributed to participants of the summer seminar at the conclusion of the presentation. Participants used a Likert scale to rate the quality of their experience and the presentation, and a space for additional comments/suggestions was provided. Both forms for evaluations and feedback are provided in Appendix A, and a discussion of the results from the feedback are discussed in Chapter 5, DISCUSSION.

Chapter Summary

In Chapter 3, METHOD, tools and procedures for the present project were discussed, and methods of assessment were disclosed. Through an extensive review of literature, a functional resource guide for current and future educators was developed. This guide was presented during a Summer seminar for teacher education students at varying levels of education and experience.

Chapter 4, RESULTS, contains the description, format, and materials used in the presentation, as well as the guidebook itself. Chapter 5, DISCUSSION, provides a discussion of peer evaluations and participant feedback.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

The purpose of the project was to develop and present a comprehensive guidebook for current and future teachers of English language learners (ELLs). This guide contains practical, research-based strategies for teachers to make content more comprehensible for those students with limited English proficiency in the regular classroom.

Presentation

The project and guidebook were presented to teacher education students who attend a Jesuit university in Colorado. The focal point of the presentation was the guidebook, though a sample elementary lesson, assessment, second language, and participant feedback were also used during the presentation.

Audience

The project was presented during a Summer seminar held for teacher education students at both the graduate and undergraduate levels in July of 2007. These teacher education students had varying levels of experience and education, and the majority of these students were English only speakers. All teacher education students at the presentation were adult learners, lived in the Midwest, and chose to attend this particular session over several other options.

Teacher education students who anticipate working with a linguistically diverse student population will be interested in this project, as will current teachers who seek more effective strategies in order to make content comprehensible to the ELLs in their classrooms.

The goal of this project will be to provide current and future educators with clear and practical strategies for teaching in a linguistically diverse setting. It is this researcher's expectation that teachers who attend this presentation will come away with user friendly strategies that can be implemented on a daily basis with students of varying linguistic backgrounds and levels of English language acquisition.

Format

The format of the presentation was as follows:

1. Introduction and review of the agenda,
2. Presentation of strategies within the guidebook,
3. Presentation of the lesson in Spanish, with discussion of the application of strategies discussed in the guide,
4. Lesson activity/assessment,
5. Questions
6. Evaluation of the presentation and guide

Lesson and Assessment

The lesson used in the presentation was from the content area of Science, and the objective of the lesson was to enable students to identify and describe the physical similarities and differences between two major families of animals (mammals and fish). Each idea within the lesson was first taught without the use of strategies for enhancing comprehension for language learners, then strategies were discussed and applied. The lesson was taught in Spanish in order to simulate the experience of the ELL in the regular, English-only classroom. Though a survey was not taken before the presentation, this population of adult learners typically consists of students with varying levels of language acquisition in Spanish, ranging from monolingual English speakers, to bilingual/biliterate English and Spanish speakers. The number of students and the amount

of Spanish spoken by these students in this seminar reflected the range of students learning English in a regular classroom setting in the Rocky Mountain Region. An assessment was given immediately after the lesson. The assessment took the form of a T-chart, labeled mamifero (mammal) on one side, and pez (fish) on the other. Students were provided with glue sticks and pictures of the following: lungs, gills, eggs, baby animals nursing, fur, scales, various examples of mammals, and various examples of fish. Students were expected to glue the pictures onto the appropriate side of the T-chart.

Though the lesson plan is written in English, the lesson itself was presented in Spanish. Though this presentation was given in Spanish and English, the resources presented can be introduced in any language other than English, should an instructor choose to present this project at another workshop.

Lesson Plan

Title: Classifying mammals and fish

Content Area: Life Science

Grade Level: First Grade

Standards Addressed: Colorado Department of Education Standard 3: Students know and understand the characteristics, structures, processes, and relationships of organisms, and how these may be affected by environmental changes and the passages of time. (p. 11 of BVSD Science curriculum)

Objective: Students will be able to identify and describe the physical similarities and differences between two major families of animals (mammals and fish).

Learning Styles Addressed: Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic

Anticipatory Set: Teacher will give an example of a mammal and a fish (for example, a hamster and a goldfish), and ask the students to point out similarities and differences between the two.

* As an example of teaching without strategies, the presenter gave these two examples orally. Realia (real specimens) were used to demonstrate the use of enhanced learning strategies for language learners.

Direct Instruction:

After writing several student ideas on the board, teacher will then elaborate on the similarities and differences between the two, including the following facts:

- Mammals breathe air into their lungs, while fish breathe water through their gills. Both animals, however, remove the oxygen from the air/water.
- Mammals give birth to live babies, while most fish lay eggs.
- Mammal babies drink milk from their mothers, while fish do not.
- Mammals have fur or hair, while fish have scales.
- Fish live in water, while mammals may live in the water or on land.

After comparing the two groups of animals, teacher will offer several examples of animals for the students to classify. Included in these examples will be whales and dolphins. Teacher will stop to discuss these animals that look like fish but are actually mammals. Teacher will point out that although these animals live in the water, they continually come to the surface to take in air.

* To illustrate teaching without strategies to enhance comprehension, direct instruction was auditory only. The presenter then used pictures and realia to pre-teach vocabulary. Specific items used included:
  - A swatch of fur
  - Sequined paper (scales)
  - A picture of eggs

- A picture of nursing piglets
- A sketch of water
- Pictures of lungs and gills
  All of the above items were clearly labeled and posted on the board within a Venn diagram (key visual).

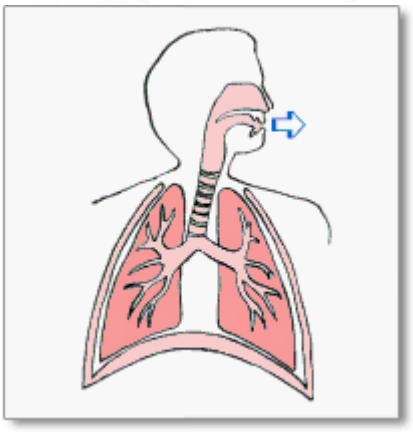
Guided Practice: Students will work in partners, and be provided with glue sticks and pictures of the following: lungs, gills, eggs, baby animals nursing, fur, scales, various examples of mammals, and various examples of fish. Students will glue the pictures onto the appropriate side of a T-chart labeled *mammal* on one side, and *fish* on the other. Teacher will be available to students who require assistance or clarification.

Independent Practice: n/a

Assessment: The results of the guided practice activity,will serve as a summative assessment for the lesson.

Closure: At the end of the lesson, the teacher will ask the participants what the lesson was about and what types of facts were discussed. This will be conducted in English as a large group.

Pictures To Be used Within the Lesson




FOTOSEARCH


Acclaim Images

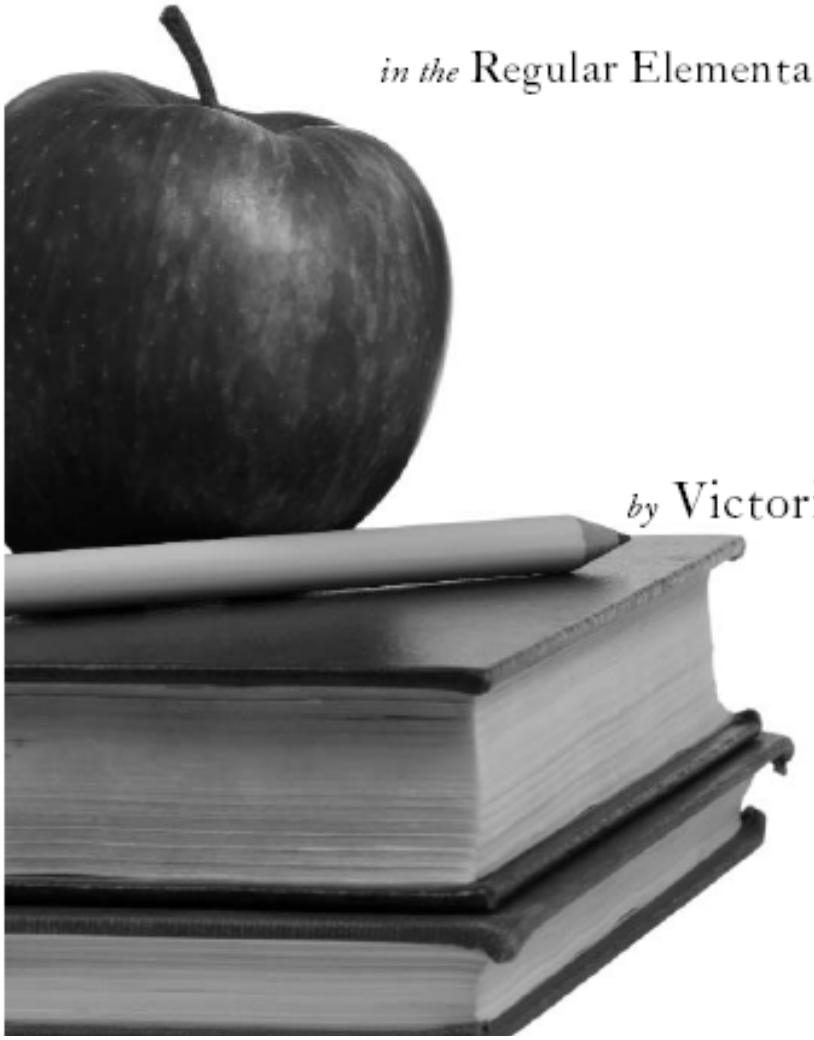
Assessment

Mamifero	Pez

A Teachers' Guide to

TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

in the Regular Elementary Classroom.



by Victoria Woolford

JULY, 2007

TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS IN THE REGULAR ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

by

Victoria Woolford

A Research Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Education

REGIS UNIVERSITY

August, 2007

Contents

Introduction

In the United States, there are approximately 48 million people who speak a language other than English at home, 23 million of whom speak English less than "very well" (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005, p. 3). With a large and growing population of English language learners (ELLs) in the U.S. school system, bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers alone cannot meet the educational needs of such large populations (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Students with limited English proficiency are increasingly forced out of specialized instruction and into the mainstream classroom. Thus, regular classroom teachers are regularly faced with the task of educating students of different linguistic backgrounds, many of whom are new or emergent English language learners. For millions of elementary school teachers, with no background in linguistically diverse education, this poses a poignant challenge.

Linguistic diversity in the classroom is often particularly challenging to U.S. educators who are monolingual English speakers. Many educators cannot relate to being immersed in an unfamiliar language and culture, and the myriad of research, theory, and opinion based literature available to teachers can be confusing and overwhelming. As a result, ELL students in the U.S. school system are often misunderstood, devalued, or ignored altogether. Although information on teaching ELLs in the regular classroom is abundant, there is a lack of clear, user friendly, practical guides for teachers.

Effective Strategies

The purpose of this guide is to present current and future educators with practical, explicit, research based strategies for their teaching of elementary students in a linguistically diverse setting. The focus of the guide and subsequent presentation is on teaching emergent English speakers in the regular classroom, as opposed to in the ESL or bilingual classroom.

The following guide was written with the needs of the regular classroom teacher as the focus. All of the ideas and strategies presented herein are simple techniques that can be implemented immediately with minimal planning or extra effort on the part of the teacher. In addition, the strategies presented within this guide are intended for use in a linguistically diverse setting. Though the methods within this guide are meant to benefit the ELL students in the classroom, none of the following ideas detract from the quality of education of those students who are fluent in the English language.

Comprehensible Instruction

ELL students are able to comprehend new vocabulary when they can determine the meaning of new words through context, prior knowledge, or visual support (Coelho, 2004). There are numerous practical ways to make oral instruction more comprehensible. The following list of instructional strategies has been adapted from *Adding English* by E. Coelho:

- Simplify vocabulary. Consider the difference between the statements, “I expect the assignment to be completed and turned in tomorrow morning,” and, “Finish this tonight. Give it to me tomorrow.”
- Draw attention to new vocabulary, key ideas, and important instructions by articulating, pausing, repeating, and, when appropriate, writing out the new word. Also, have students repeat the new word, idea, or instruction as a group.
- Avoid idioms and figures of speech. Some examples of these include, “Take a stab at it,” and “Give it a shot.” If such phrases are used, clarify their intended meaning.
- Use nonverbal cues when speaking, such as gestures, facial expressions, and mime.
- Speak naturally, but slowly. ELL students may require more processing time to comprehend the spoken word, but also must learn to recognize language as it is really spoken. For example, it is important for ELL students to learn contractions such as *shouldn’t*, and spoken forms such as *gonna*. The meanings of these words are easily implied if the student is able to comprehend the rest of the sentence.
- Provide plenty of wait time after asking a question or giving a prompt

Pre-teach Vocabulary

Teachers are encouraged to teach students the vocabulary that is relevant to a unit before beginning the unit. This is relevant not only to ELLs, but also to the native English speakers in the classroom. Teachers may select a few key words from the text or lesson to teach before a lesson begins (Cary, 2000 and Coelho, 2004). In addition, students may be able to select vocabulary words by skimming books and observing class materials that pertain to the unit before beginning the unit. The teacher then explains each identified word with pictures, realia (real items), and explanation. If students in the classroom share the same native language, it is often useful to have more advanced ELLs explain the words to newer language learners.

Word walls and picture dictionaries are effective means to pre-teach vocabulary (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). These can be used both before and during a unit.

Word walls are an effective tool to use when many ELL students are present in the classroom. A word wall is a visual display which consists of a variety of illustrated vocabulary words that pertain to a particular unit. For example, in two local classrooms, students identified the following vocabulary for their unit on insects: wings, insect, venom, moth, head, dragonfly, exoskeleton, fly, and praying mantis (Buhrow & Garcia, 2006). Students identified these vocabulary words in books, magazines, and posters, and deemed them relevant to the upcoming unit. The class then posted these illustrated words on the word wall within the classroom in order to “keep their thinking visible”

(p. 81). These vocabulary words may be identified before the unit begins, or can be completed over the course of a unit, as students gradually expand their schema and vocabulary. Alternatively, a teacher may choose to identify the appropriate vocabulary before the unit is taught, and assign these words for the students to illustrate. As the students' English language abilities progress, simple vocabulary can then be expanded to frame sentences in order to differentiate and scaffold learning for the different levels in the class. For example, three vocabulary words can be put into one sentence, as in "Moths use their wings to fly"

Picture dictionaries are very similar, but are generally more individualized. For example, while a word wall is a collective work on display, a picture dictionary is usually a book of vocabulary words for an individual student. The teacher provides students with a book of alphabetized pages (i.e., page 1 is labeled *A*, page 2 is labeled *B*, page 3 is labeled *C*, etc.). On each page, several blank squares are provided for illustrations. Under each square is a line where the student can write the new vocabulary word. In classrooms with many ELL students, word walls are essential in order to allow students quick reference to relevant vocabulary. Picture dictionaries can also be used in this type of setting, or can be used as a reference for ELL students in settings where the majority of students are fluent English speakers.

Advance Organizers

Closely related to pre-teaching vocabulary, advance organizers can be used before a lesson is presented to prepare the brain to receive the information that will be presented in the lesson (Herrell & Jordan, 2004, and Marzano, Pickering, & Pollock, 2001). Through advance organizers, teachers create experiences that link previous knowledge with new concepts (Herrell & Jordan, 2004) and give students an idea of what the lesson or unit has in store. There are several forms advance organizers may take.

- Pictures, photographs, and realia can be used as advance organizers. For example, before teaching a lesson about community helpers, a teacher passes around photographs of the local firehouse, post office, and library. The teacher displays pictures of community helpers and scenes, and provides students with a real police badge, a working stethoscope, and a cash register to explore and discuss. Through these advance organizers, teachers can prepare ELL students for the upcoming unit by providing meaningful experiences in advance of the lesson. This activity can also be used as a step in pre-teaching vocabulary.
- Material to be taught can be read orally by the teacher (Herrell & Jordan., 2004) or skimmed silently by the students (Coelho, 2004 and Marzano et al., 2001) before a lesson is presented. This gives students an idea of what the imminent material may be about. For example, before beginning a lesson about Alaska, the teacher

reads aloud a brief description of the Alaskan landscape, and then assigns students to observe a map of Alaska for homework. Students are instructed to come prepared with one question or observation the following day. By giving students a sample of what they will be learning, the teacher better enables ELL students to recognize frequently used or unusual words in a text, or make connections to previous learning. This exercise also gives the teacher the opportunity to find out what students already know and base his or her teaching on this informal pre-assessment.

- Key visuals can be used before a lesson is taught in order to compare and contrast the new idea with previous learning (Coelho, 2004 and Marzano et al., 2001). These are graphic organizers designed by the teacher to lower the language barrier and provide practice in classifying, comparing and contrasting, chronology, cause and effect, etc. First, the teacher briefly introduces an idea, and then models how to use the visual, making explicit reference to previous learning. As a large group, students add to the visual, thus activating their own prior knowledge, as well as that of their classmates. During or after the lesson, students add new information to the visual, and modify any incorrect information. With younger elementary school students, pictures are most effective within the form, but upper elementary students may use pictures, words, or both (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). When using key visuals, students benefit most

when participating as a large group. In this way, ELL students can observe the ideas of their classmates and use inductive reasoning to determine the meaning and purpose of the visual and its contents. The format of the visual should represent a concept that might otherwise be difficult for ELL students to understand.

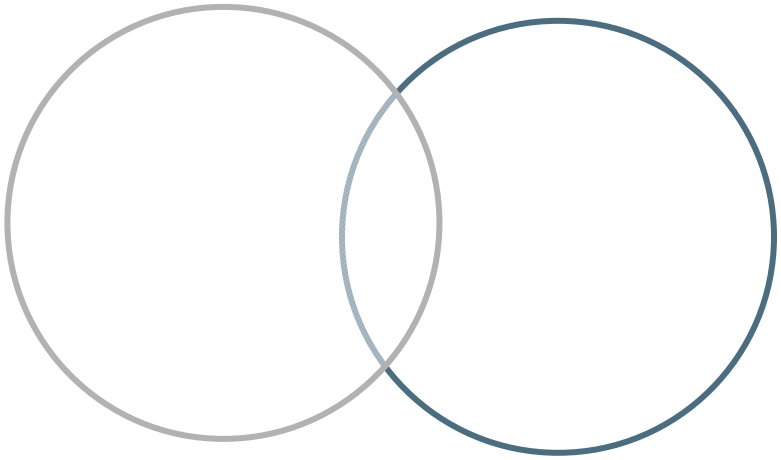
Such key visuals include:

- Venn diagrams
- T-charts
- Flow charts
- Concept maps
- Timelines
- KWL charts

These key visuals should be posted and kept visible throughout a unit. Students and teacher can add to them as they expand their schema, or knowledge, of a particular topic. Reproducible examples of these visuals are provided in the following pages.

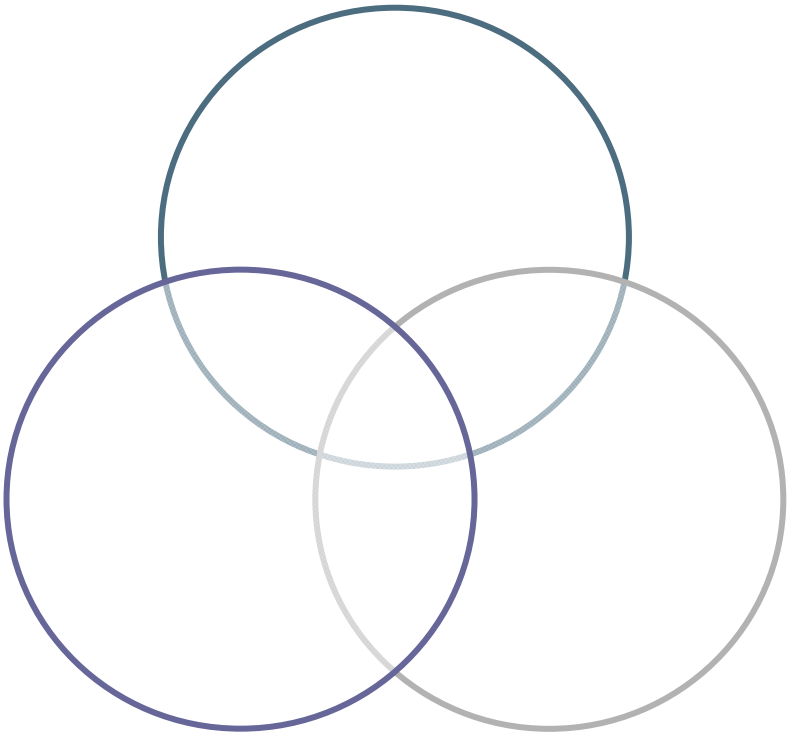
Venn Diagram

(Two Rings)

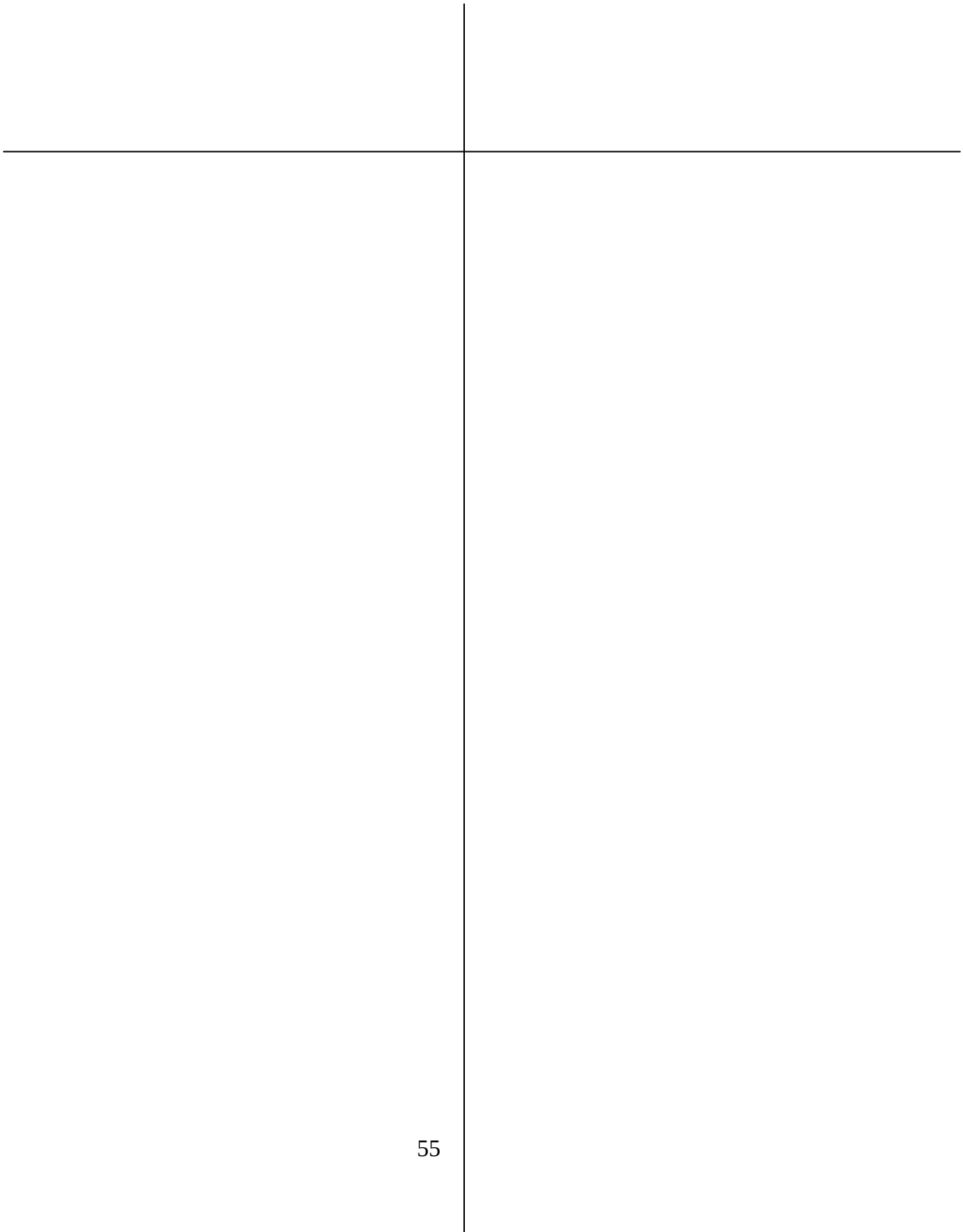


Venn Diagram

(Three Rings)

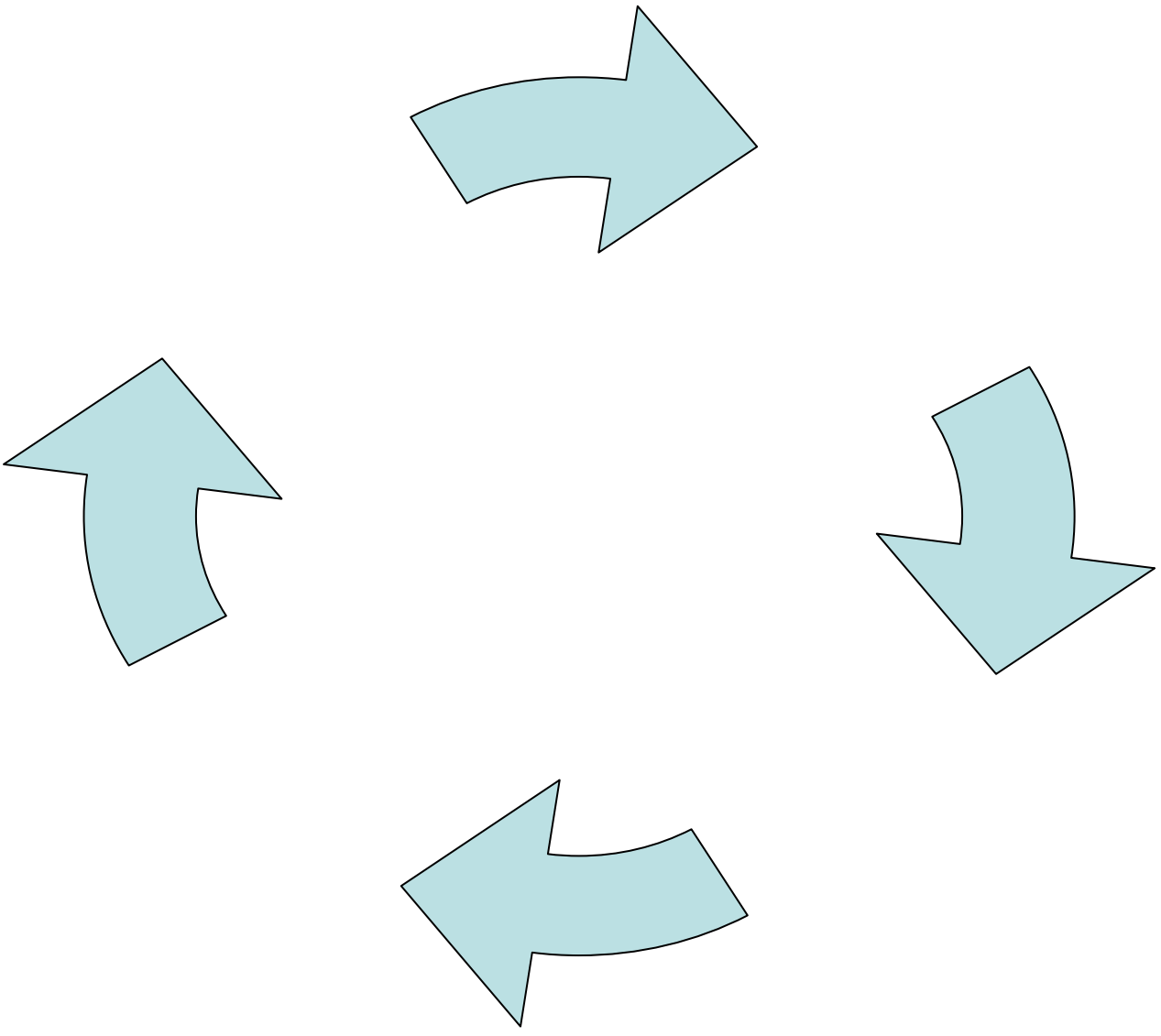


T-Chart



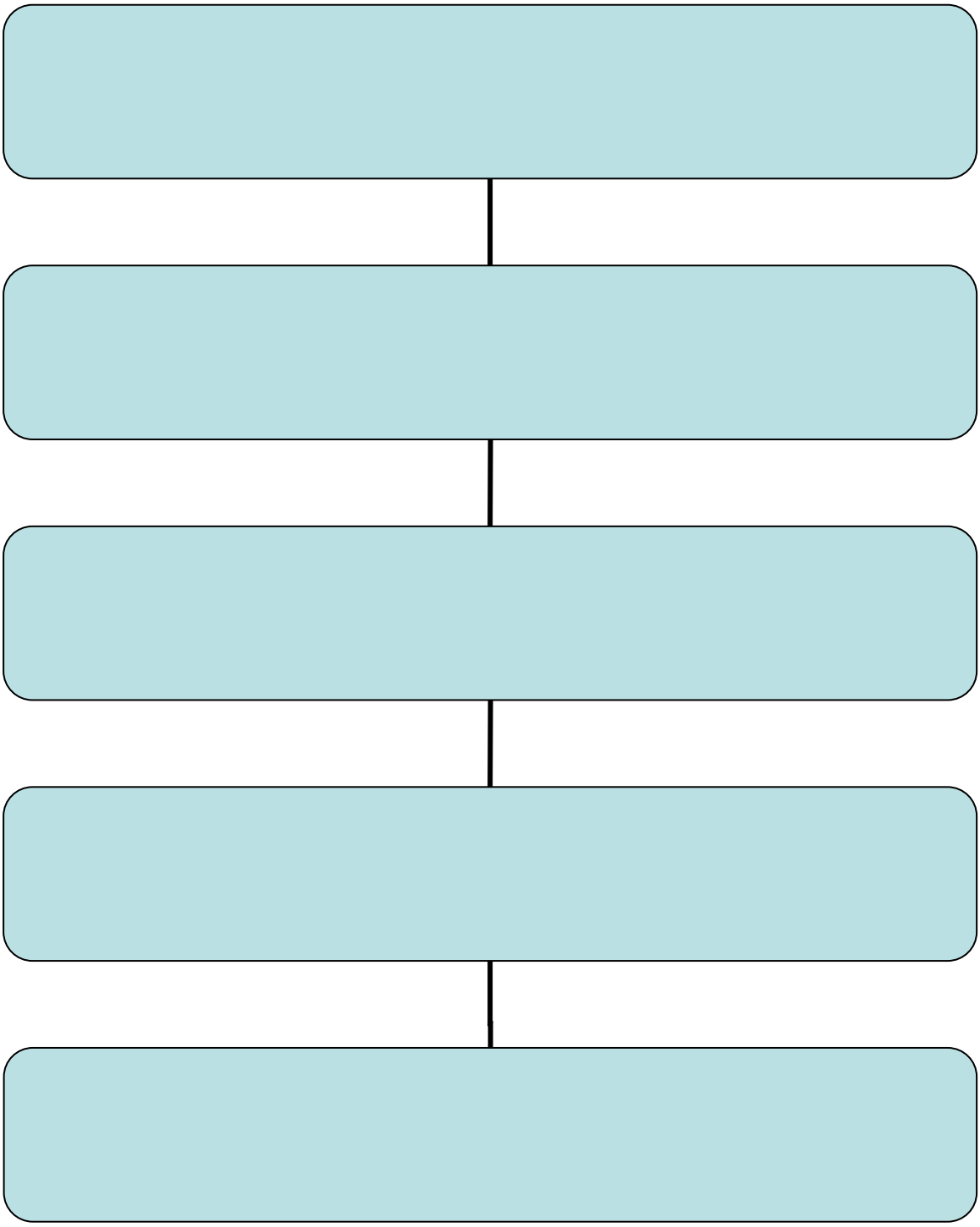
Flowchart

(Cyclical)

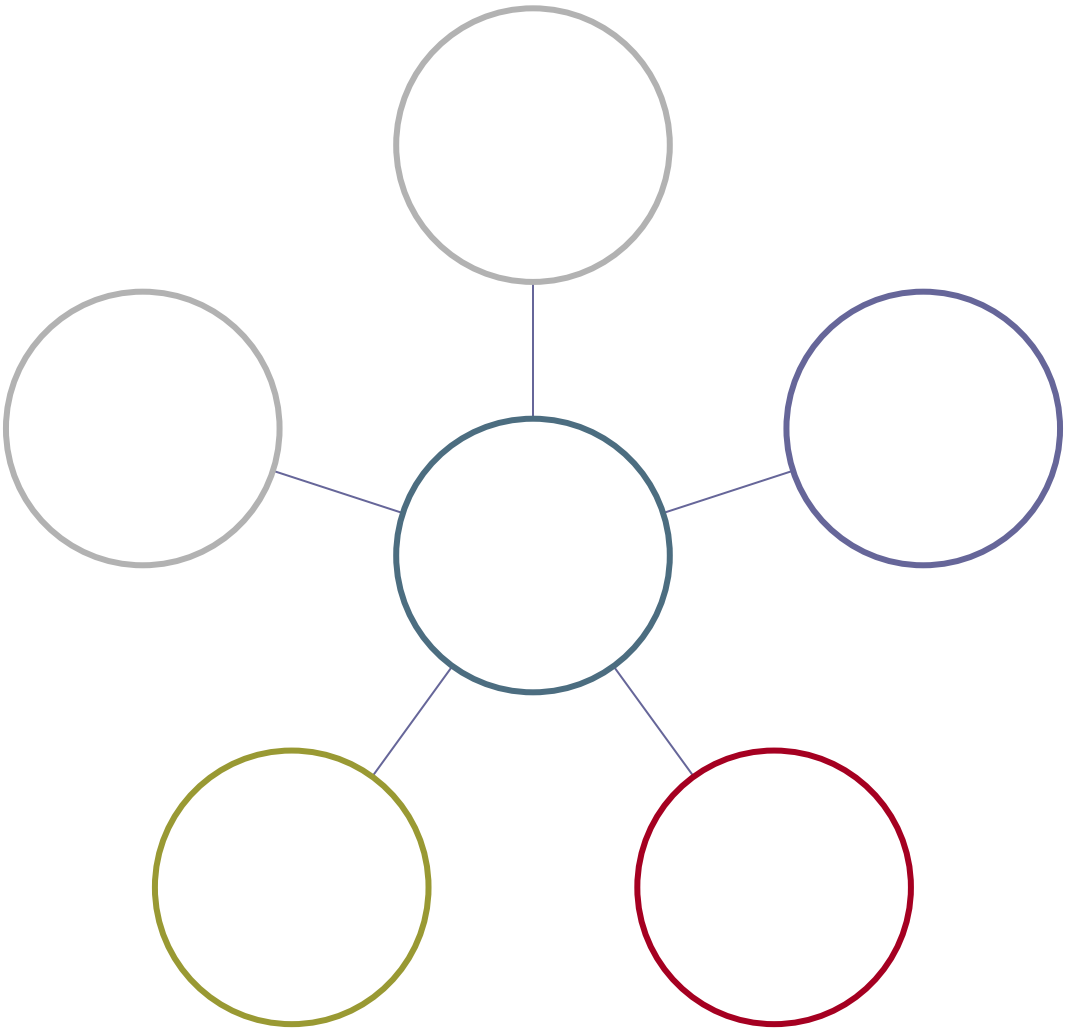


Flowchart

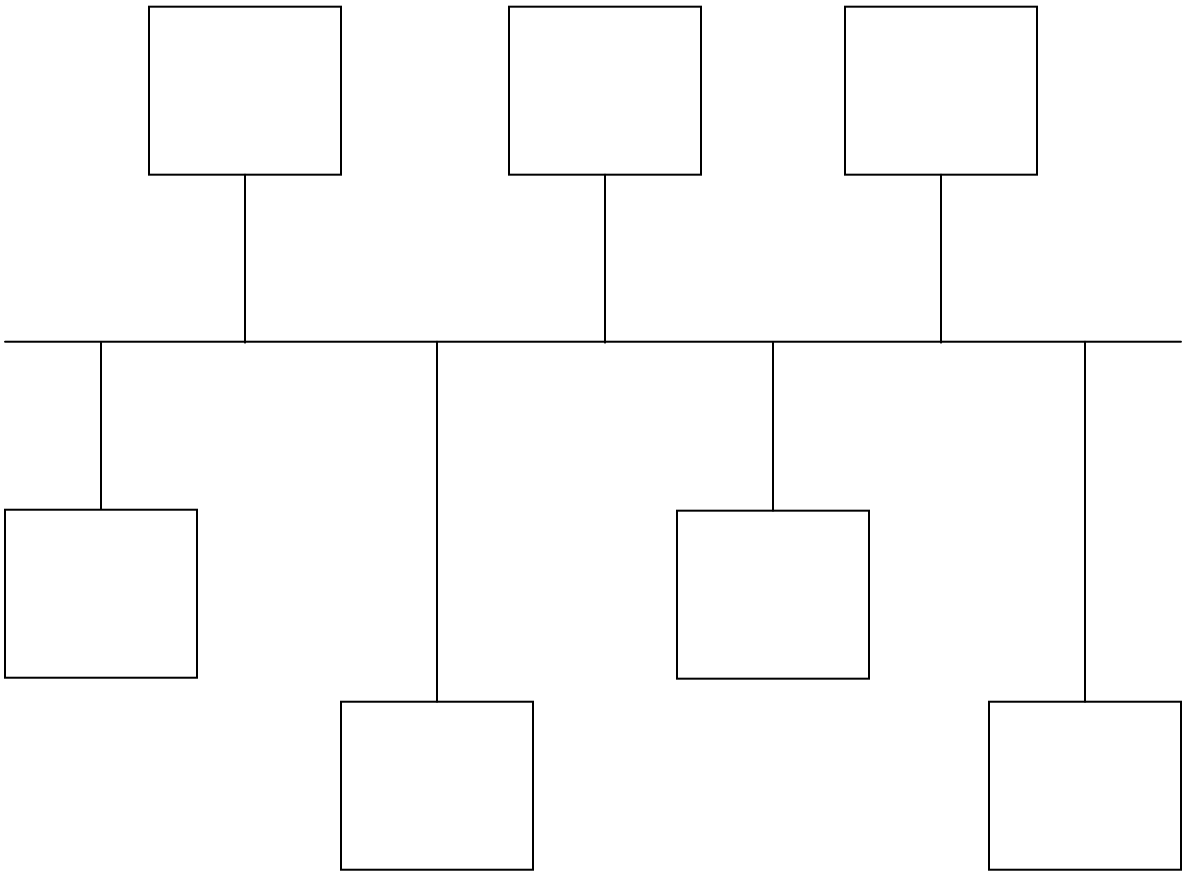
(Linear)



Concept Map



Timeline



KWL Chart

What I Know	What I Want to Know	What I Learned

Collaborative Groups

ELL students benefit from working with their peers (Cary, 2000 and Herrell & Jordan, 2004). During large group activities, ELL students are able to observe and learn from their classmates' responses. This is a valuable starting point, but at times, large group settings cause ELL students to be overlooked. It is a common situation in classrooms that native English speakers understand, and thus respond to, the teachers' prompts with more ease than their ELL counterparts. This means fewer opportunities for interaction and success for the ELL.

Though large group activities have their place in the classroom (Saphier & Gower, 1997), collaborative grouping is much more effective at aiding comprehension and fostering verbal interaction for ELL students (Coelho, 2004 and Herrell & Jordan, 2004). While many ELL students may feel intimidated speaking in front of a large group, small groups provide a more comfortable environment for verbal expression (Coelho, 2004). When working in collaborative groups, team building is a necessary precursor (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). For example, a teacher presents the students with an initial challenge that requires teamwork, such as lining up alphabetically without speaking, or according to birthday, height, or color of clothing. Such activities cultivate cooperation and collaboration among team members, and prepare the students for work which requires mutual support.

During collaborative group activities, it is essential that the participation of each team member be vital for the success of the group. To create such teams, the teacher must create groups that consist of the

same number of students as there are jobs to be accomplished. For example, during a science activity, the teacher assigns students to work in groups of four. Each student is responsible for one of the following roles: (a) materials manager, (b) data recorder, (c) director of procedures, and (d) task supervisor. The teacher has explained the responsibilities of each job, and students are fully aware that the success of the group depends on the success of each student within the group. It is helpful if each student receives a card, which states their job title and job description. These cards may be worn as name tags to remind each member of the group of the responsibilities of the individual. Roles particularly suited to the ELL are ones which require visual, artistic, or physical activity. More advanced ELL students may also be held responsible for ensuring understanding of other students who share the same native language. In addition, shy students and those who tend to participate less can be assigned leadership roles so that they can have experience in leading a group.

Teachers must carefully monitor these groups to ensure that members are supporting one another, and that each member is focused on his or her own role. Without proper training and supervision, natural leaders often take over, while those students who are shy or need the most support are overlooked and excluded.

Signals

When a language is not fully developed, signals and gestures can be paramount in aiding understanding for ELL students (Herrell & Jordan, 2004). Such signals are most useful when they are consistent and used in conjunction with the appropriate vocabulary. When predictable signals and gestures are used, attention is called to the words being spoken by the teacher, and the action resulting from the words is clearly observable. After students have experienced the same signal or gesture several times, they are able to focus their energy more on the instruction and less on trying to understand what is happening. Some examples of these signals and gestures include:

- Thumbs up/thumbs down. This gesture can be used to represent level of understanding, yes or no, like or dislike, complete or incomplete, and is best used in a large group setting. However, see the section on cultural norms before implementing.

- Signals to indicate transition. Such signals might include turning off the lights, clapping hands, or ringing a bell. It is important that whatever signal a teacher chooses to use, it elicits a specific behavior. For example, when the teacher sounds the wind chimes, students are expected to begin cleaning up, but if the teacher turns off the lights, the students are expected to stop what they are doing and give their attention to the teacher. These signals are accompanied by the teacher explaining what it is the students are doing, such as, "Now that the lights are off and you all have your eyes on me, I will tell you what we will be doing in the next five minutes," or "when the music is on we are working quietly."

Total Physical Response

The Total Physical Response (TPR) approach has been proven to be effective with aiding listening comprehension for ELL students (Coelho, 2004). TPR is a method of teaching where the teacher asks questions and gives commands, which can be answered or carried out by a physical movement in lieu of a verbal response. Initially, the teacher explains the activity, gives the command or question, and models the response for the class. When students become familiar with these actions, the teacher gives the commands or questions without modeling the nonverbal response. Eventually, the students are able to give the command and expect the appropriate response. For example, in a local second grade classroom, students learn to create, recognize, and continue patterns using physical movements such as claps, stomps, and dance moves. A growing pattern, for example, might be "touch head, clap, stomp, touch head, clap, clap, stomp, touch head, clap, clap, clap, stomp, etc." In this way, ELL students are equally equipped to respond to the various questions and commands, and students are asked only to demonstrate their understanding of the idea that is being taught. Students' grasp of the language is not in questions in this type of approach, the teacher respects and allows a student's silent period, and the playing field is leveled.

Peer Tutors

A system of peer tutors or buddies not only supports ELL students (Cary, 2000), but has also been shown to benefit the tutor (Coelho, 2004). According to Coelho, “Students in the early stages of learning English benefit from the help of bilingual peer tutors.” (p. 186). Ideally, the newcomer is partnered with another student who is bilingual in English as well as the new student’s language, but if this is not possible, a friendly, sensitive student is also a good choice. It is important that these sets of partners are assigned specific goals when working together. For example, the teacher assigns a pair to read a passage together, stopping to discuss words that cause difficulty. When the new student can explain the events or the main idea in the passage with clarity, both students have successfully completed their assigned task. It is equally important that the tutors be recognized for their efforts.

Cultural Norms

Body language, gestures, and rules exist in every language, however, they are often culture or language specific (Coelho, 2004). It is important that a teacher become sensitive to and aware of these cultural norms in order to communicate competently. Though it is impossible to learn and observe every cultural norm that one might come across in the classroom, it is wise for a teacher to research the cultural norms specific to those students in the classroom each year. In addition, it is imperative to become sensitive to these norms. If a teacher uses an expression or gesture that causes consternation or hilarity among some students, the teacher should explain what the phrase or gesture means, and ask what it means in the students' culture. Similarly, if a student uses a phrase or gesture that is offensive, puzzling, or unintentionally funny, the teacher should ask the student what they mean, and teach him a better word or gesture to use. Don't be afraid to laugh at your own errors, but do not laugh at the errors of the students unless they are laughing as well.

Although there are millions of cultural norms to be learned, there are several that teachers tend to come across more frequently. The following are some examples of cultural norms that may cause amusement or confusion in the classroom. All of the following examples have been adapted from E. Coelho's *Adding English* or have been experienced first hand by myself.

- In Latino cultures, it is common to call others by their most striking feature when names are unknown. The features may be positive or negative, and may include such names as Rubio (blond), Gordo (fat), Guero (white-skinned), or Negro (black). Such names are not considered offensive in Latino cultures. (Clark, n.d.) In addition, it is a sign of respect to call the teacher "Teacher" rather than by his or her name (Coelho, 2004).
- In Indian and Nepali cultures, shaking one hand in the American "so-so" gesture means "no." A wobble of the head means "yes."
- In Bulgaria, a brief shake of the head means "yes," and a sharp toss of the head upward indicates "no" (Coelho, 2004).
- In many Buddhist cultures it is considered rude to touch another person's head. This is especially pertinent to elementary teachers who often use a pat on the head as a sign of affection or approval.
- In Southeast Asian cultures, it is often a sign of disrespect to point the bottoms of one's feet toward another person.
- In many Asian cultures, children are forbidden from making direct eye contact with adults (Coelho, 2004). In addition, some children do not initiate conversations with or ask questions of adults. This is a sign of respect for authority.
- In India, the left hand is not used in public. It is offensive to touch a person or object with the left hand.
- Naming practices vary among cultures. For example, if a teacher called Lam Van Bao's mother "Mrs. Bao," the teacher would be addressing her by her son's given name. The English equivalent would be to call Joey Smith's mother "Mrs. Joey" (Coelho, 2004).
- Please, thank you, and I'm sorry are not always as frequently used in other countries as they are in the United States (Coelho, 2004). Additionally, they may be used in different contexts. For example, in Spanish *lo siento* means I'm sorry. However, if the teacher were to bump into a Mexican student and say *lo siento*, the teacher would be, in essence, pleading

forgiveness from the student. In French, *merci*, which means thank you, is often used to indicate refusal (Coelho, 2004).

- In some cultures, the display of an open mouth may be offensive (Coelho, 2004).
- Personal space and physical touch vary among cultures (Coelho, 2004). For example, in North America, physical touch is generally restricted to family members and those in close relationships. In some cultures including those within India, Nepal, and Africa, physical touch is acceptable only among members of the same sex, and it is common for two men to hold hands in public, but not for a husband and wife to do so.
- The thumbs up and ok gestures are considered insults in some cultures (Coelho, 2004).

Silent Periods, BICS, and CALP

Second language acquisition is generally described in stages. The first stage of second language acquisition is commonly referred to as a silent phase (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982; Krashen, 1981). During this period, students absorb the language spoken in a naturalistic setting for use in later stages of second language acquisition. According to Dulay et al., "Delaying oral practice or observing a silent period until learners are ready to speak in the new language are beneficial practices" (p. 42). During this stage, learners may begin to produce single words and formulae (Pienemann, 1995). Formulae can be described as a string of words that conveys a single meaning, much like an individual word might. For example, a learner in stage one might say, "How are you?" Although the learner does not necessarily understand how to use the different forms of "to be" and the systematic copula inversion that pertains to questions; nevertheless, the speaker understands that the phrase is used as a greeting, and usually elicits a pleasant response. Krashen referred to these utterances as prefabricated patterns. They are partly memorized, partly creative sentences. For example, a learner might memorize the words, "I have," and creatively input the appropriate noun. Though some utterances are common during the silent period, it is often the case that during a student's silent period they remain just that – silent.

It is important that teachers recognize and respect their ELL students' silent periods. Teachers may also choose to advise other students to interact with the ELL, but also to respect his or her silent

period. Teachers can interact with silent students by speaking without asking for a response, or by using the TPR approach discussed earlier.

In addition to silent periods, it is pertinent to identify basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP).

BICS students are able to converse with other students and adults. Because of their competence in interpersonal communication, they appear to easily carry on conversations in English or whatever the target language may be. However, BICS students lack the academic language to actually learn in the target language. For example, a teacher might observe an ELL student conversing casually in English with his or her classmates in a social setting. The teacher might also notice that the student appears comfortable using language when speaking with the teacher. Therefore, the teacher assumes that the student is fluent in English, and proceeds to treat the student as any native English speaker. However, it is often the case that ELL students who have BICS are still developing CALP, and are nowhere near this level of proficiency in their academic, *learning*, language. In fact, in high schools, the highest dropout rate among Latino students is during a stage of second language acquisition where the student has progressed beyond the bounds of the ESL classroom, and is then expected to perform as a native English speaker. It is at this stage where teachers often jump to the conclusion that fluent is fluent, and support is no longer needed.

Safe Environment for Language Risk Taking

Learning is taking risks. Students take risks when volunteering a response to a teacher prompt, taking on a role in a collaborative group, offering an idea, and putting thoughts into writing. For ELL students, the risk is magnified because whenever they speak, they risk language errors that may cause confusion, amusement, and embarrassment. In addition, the anxiety experienced by ELL students usually results in more errors in oral language.

There are many ways that teachers can lessen the stress of speaking for ELL students in the classroom. First, the teacher must take an objective look at his or her own responses to ELL students' oral language. Things to look for and eliminate include direct corrections, finding humor in mistakes, and publicly acknowledging errors. In addition to monitoring the teacher's responses, the teacher must also train students to be sensitive to new language learners. This training should be explicit and should not focus on the individual ELL students in the class. For example, consider the following classroom scenario: An ELL takes a risk and responds to a teacher prompt in a large group setting. The response is thoughtful and correct, but the student mispronounces the word sheets as shits. In this situation, a well-meaning teacher might address the class by saying, "Boys and girls, don't laugh at Cassandra; English is not her first language." A teacher who is more aware of and sensitive to the anxiety of public speaking in a second language, however, would discuss the differences in language between a new ELL student and a native English speaker. In addition, a

sensitive teacher would teach students explicit techniques to handle these types of situations. For example, the teacher would instruct students to stifle their laughter and imagine themselves in the other person's shoes. At an appropriate time (i.e., when other students cannot hear), the native English speaker or teacher may explain the error and the correct pronunciation to the ELL student.

It is important that teachers not only respect students' native languages and cultures, but also that they openly recognize these differences as a valuable enrichment to the class. One local teacher does this by explicitly pointing out "How lucky we are to have someone in our class who is from the Netherlands!" and "What a gift! _____ will be able to speak in two languages!" Students' cultures are actively incorporated into this classroom by asking ELL students to teach the class how to sing Happy Birthday and count to ten in their home languages. Not only does this demonstrate value of cultures beyond that of the United States, but also puts native English speakers in the place of the language learner. Heritage foods are also shared during holiday celebrations, and music from the cultures of the classroom is played throughout the year.

"We" language is also important. From the very first day of school, teachers must make it clear that we will all work together, and we will help each other, so that we can all progress and learn. Also, that we will not discriminate against each other because of different levels, because we are all very comfortable in some areas, but we all are uncomfortable in some areas as well.

Strategies and Habits to Avoid

Although teachers must be aware of and able to use the above strategies in order to effectively teach English Language Learners in the regular classroom, it is equally important for teachers to know what *not* to do in the classroom. Through good intentions or lack of information, teachers often pick up habits that not only are unhelpful, but may actually inhibit the natural acquisition of the second language.

Correction of Errors

Often, in traditional teaching, it is accepted that errors should be corrected as soon as possible to avoid setting patterns that will be difficult to rectify later (Pienemann, 1995). However, in second language acquisition, “Correction…does not seem to be effective in enhancing the acquisition of the corrected structure” (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982, p. 43).

First, when every error is corrected, it prevents the student from feeling relaxed in speaking the second language (Pienemann, 1995). When students feel self-conscious, they are less likely to concentrate on the content of their speaking because they become preoccupied with the form and grammar of the second language. Indeed, Yule (1996) cited studies, which were conducted with adults that advocated “French with cognac” or “Russian with vodka” (p. 192). The addition of alcohol removes some of the self-consciousness that inhibits the use of second languages and can be beneficial to a point. However, usually, inhibition returns with sobriety

The second reason that errors should not necessarily be corrected always is that errors may not be a reflection of a bad learning habit, but can demonstrate whether, and how, the learner reconstructs the second language in his or her own mind (Pienemann, 1995). Because learning is actively constructed (Nieto, 1999), such errors are simply examples of how one reconstructs his or her learning. An example of an error that results from creative reconstruction is when an English language learner uses the word, “goed,” for “went” (Pienemann, 1995) or,

“womans”, for “women” (Yule, 1996). The learner who uses these words shows that he or she is familiar with the correct past tense and plural inflectional endings (i.e., -ed and -s, respectively), but has over-generalized these rules. Errors such as these are common in the beginning stages of second language development and usually begin to disappear with more exposure to the second language (Pieneman, 1995).

Although teachers need not, indeed should not, correct every error made by ELL students (Krashen, 1981), it must be said that these errors should be addressed indirectly by responding to the student with the correct form of the word (Coelho, 2004). For example, if an ELL says, “I no come to school yesterday. I have hedeck,” a supportive teacher response would be, “You didn’t come to school yesterday because you had a headache? Do you feel better today?” (p. 187).

Insistence on English only

Research has shown that maintenance and affirmation of students' cultures and languages fosters learning (Nieto, 1999). In Nieto's book *A Light in Their Eyes*, Dolson (1985, as cited in Nieto) described the difference between additive and subtractive bilingual homes. In an additive home, the family continues to speak their native language while they learn English. In a subtractive home, the family opts to speak English only in the home. Also, the terms additive and subtractive, apply to school settings (Crawford, 2004). Dolson found that students from additive homes academically outperformed those from subtractive homes. Nieto supported this idea and maintained that the addition of a second language helps to develop metalinguistic awareness, which is a greater understanding of how language itself works. This awareness can then help students use language for further learning.

It is important for teachers to not only allow students to speak their native language among themselves, but also to promote tolerance within the classroom, and publicly display the value of bilingualism and culture.

Coercion to Speak English before Students are Ready

Closely related to insisting on English only is compelling students to speak English before they are ready. As previously discussed, teachers must remain aware and respectful of the students' silent period. The habit of forcing students to speak English becomes more difficult when a teacher is aware of a student's competence in the English language, yet the student refuses to use English. Often, such refusal to speak English is a result of an ELL's fear of making language mistakes and sounding foolish (Cary, 2000). To force a fearful student to speak English, particularly in front of the class, strengthens the ELL's fear of making mistakes, and makes them more likely to do so.

Instead of using coercion, a better strategy for getting reluctant students to speak English is by incorporating students' interests in the instruction, increasing time and opportunities for meaningful talk, and providing a safe place for language risk-taking (Cary, 2000). In addition to making the classroom a safe place for language risk-taking, teachers may create additional safe places, such as a stage for role playing, or, with younger students, a puppet theater. In this way the character or puppet is taking the risks, not the student.

Use of Materials that Promote Stereotypes

Many teachers don't realize how many materials in the classroom are centered around Anglo-American ideals. Teachers must become aware of the cultures within the classroom, and ensure that they are represented within the classroom. Most schools display posters which feature a group of multiethnic children working together. Though this is a great start, much more awareness of equal representation is necessary in order to promote true acceptance.

For example, many students cannot find the appropriate skin tone for coloring themselves and their families in a typical box of crayons. Multicultural crayons and construction paper, which feature many shades of skin tone, are readily available from teacher supply stores and should be used within the classroom. Many of the stories that teachers read focus on North American children and situations. The Media Specialist within the school, or the children's librarian at a local library should be able to identify books with more multicultural themes.

In addition, many awards exist for outstanding books based on a specific culture. These include:

- The John Steptoe Award for New Talent which is given to a black author and black illustrator for an outstanding book;

- The Coretta Scott King Award which is presented to a black author and a black illustrator whose works "encourage and promote world unity and peace;"

- The Pura Belpre Award which is presented to a Latino writer and illustrator whose work best portrays, affirms and celebrates the Latino cultural experience;

- The Sydney Taylor Book Award which honors outstanding books of positive Jewish content for children;

- The National Jewish Book Awards, also known as the Louis Posner Memorial Award, which recognizes children's books and children's picture books;

- The Americas Award which is given to U.S. work published in the previous year in English or Spanish which authentically or engagingly presents the experiences of individuals in Latin America or the Caribbean or Latinos in the U.S.;

- The Carter G. Woodson Award which is given to the most distinguished social science books appropriate for young readers which depict ethnicity in the United States, and;

- The Tomas Rivera Mexican Children's Book Award which honors books that authentically represent the lives of Mexican American children and young adults in the U.S. (Ramsey, 2002).

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Chapter Summary

In Chapter 4, a functional resource guide for current and future educators was provided and discussed. Within this guide, the researcher reviewed several effective strategies for teaching English language learners in the regular classroom, as well as several strategies and habits to avoid. This guide was presented during a Summer seminar for teacher education students at varying levels of education and experience.

In Chapter 5, a discussion of peer evaluations and participant feedback are provided.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this project was to develop a functional and practical guidebook for teachers to use as a tool for teaching English language learners (ELLs) in the regular classroom. This guidebook was developed for use by educators who work with or anticipate working with a linguistically and culturally diverse student population at the elementary level. The guide was accompanied by a demonstration of the strategies at work, and was presented to elementary education students and professors during a Summer seminar at a university in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Contribution of the Project

Through thorough research in the areas of history, second language acquisition, and current trends in educating ELLs, a concise, user friendly guide has been developed and distributed among current and future educators at the elementary level. Based upon results from a variety of current and historical research, this guide features ten effective strategies for teaching ELLs, as well as five strategies and habits that have been found to be counterproductive. This researcher combined research-based strategies from an abundance of sources, and presented them in a simple, succinct format that is relevant to elementary teachers.

This guidebook was presented to elementary teacher education students in the Rocky Mountain Region who anticipate working with a linguistically diverse student population, and wish to learn practical, research-based strategies to make their instruction

more comprehensible for the English language learners in their classroom. In addition, a professor who attended the presentation requested, and was granted, permission to share the guidebook with her elementary education students at the graduate level. The participants who chose to attend the presentation are now better equipped to teach the linguistically diverse students who are so prolific in this region, and the guide will continue to be distributed among graduate students at this university. In this way, the project will continue to contribute to the overall education of elementary teacher education students in the Rocky Mountain Region.

Resolution of the Original Problem

With large and growing populations of ELLs in U.S. schools, and limited language support resources and trained personnel, general classroom teachers are increasingly faced with the challenge of educating emergent English language speakers. Although information on teaching ELL students in the regular classroom is abundant, there is a lack of clear, practical guides for teachers.

Participants were presented with a guidebook that contains functional, realistic strategies that can be implemented on a daily basis in classrooms which include students of varying linguistic backgrounds and levels of English proficiency. Through the creation and distribution of this guide, the original problem was resolved, and teacher education students now have access to a clear, practical guide to educating ELLs in the regular classroom.

Limitations to the Project

One limitation to the project was its limited distribution. Because the guide was distributed at a seminar for a particular university, awareness of and access to the guide was limited to teacher education students who attend this university, were able to attend the seminar, and did not require any of the other sessions being offered at the same time.

Another limitation to the project was the limited experience of the author. Though thorough research was conducted, experts were consulted, teachers were observed, and the author worked closely with two Doctors of Education in creating the guide, the author had limited experience in personally implementing these strategies, and so may have missed some important nuances.

Recommendations for Future Research and Study

One participant recommended that the strategies featured in the guidebook be compared to strategies for teaching special education students, and be expanded to be a comprehensive guide to teaching both ELLs and special education students. A guide that combines these two concepts would be extremely useful for elementary teachers, as the majority of elementary teachers in the Rocky Mountain Region will have both types of students in their classrooms at any given time.

Another recommendation is that the effectiveness of these strategies be measured and analyzed. Though each strategy is based upon research, it would be useful to measure the difference that each strategy makes in the comprehension of the ELLs in the classroom. With this information, teachers may choose one strategy over another when multiple strategies apply, and will be more aware of their use of the strategies within their own classrooms.

Assessment, Feedback, and/or Changes

Assessment of the resource guide was obtained from four experts in the area of teaching English language learners. These experts consist of a seventh year bilingual first and second grade teacher, two retired adult ESL teachers who provided feedback collaboratively, and a veteran teacher who has experience in teaching ESL, bilingual elementary, and linguistically diverse students in the regular classroom. Two of these experts drew on experience from the public school system, and two from a local community college. Feedback was provided on an assessment form and by written comments and suggestions written or typed on the document itself.

Peer evaluations were received several days prior to the presentation of the guidebook. One of these evaluations was completed by two evaluators who provided feedback collaboratively. Overall, the feedback provided from the four peer evaluators was positive, and the suggestions greatly improved the quality of the guide.

Many editorial changes were made to the guidebook, including a rearrangement of the order in which the strategies are presented. One evaluator suggested a logical progression of these strategies, and this change was made prior to the presentation.

A very significant contribution from one evaluator was in the area of the language used within the guide. This evaluator noted that the word proficiency "tends to be looked at from a deficit perspective instead of where an individual is in his/her acquisition." The evaluator also suggested that this author reconsider the use of the words "limited" and "no proficiency," and replace them with more positive language such as "emergent speakers" and "new learners of English." The evaluator made an astute and insightful comment which caused this researcher to review the language used within the guidebook.

She wrote, “If we don’t start changing the language used to describe the students, it perpetuates negative stereotypes.”

Another observation which resulted in a change was that the assessment for the activity did not match the format of the instruction. This assessment was altered so that the format more closely represented the format of the instruction. Specifically, the instruction was presented in the form of a Venn diagram, and the assessment/activity was changed from a multiple choice format to a T-chart format.

Based upon feedback, the section titled *Pre-teach Vocabulary* was expanded to include a more clear definition of what it means to pre-teach vocabulary, as well as “the steps involved in doing the pre-teaching.” This was done in order to clarify the strategy and make it more user-friendly, and thus more accessible, to the reader.

The section entitled *Total Physical Response* (TPR) received many comments and suggestions, some of which were contradictory. One evaluator described TPR as “an incredible technique that can be used for listening, speaking, reading, writing, and many levels of doing,” and suggested a deeper explanation of this technique. Another evaluator provided the author with a demonstration of the TPR approach, because of its broad implications in the classroom. The third evaluator, on the other hand, wrote, “I’m not sure it would be appropriate for mainstream classroom work, particularly when introducing the movements.” Though this is a valid point, the section on TPR was included in the guide regardless, based on this researcher’s observations of successful learning using the TPR approach in mainstream classrooms. The description of the TPR approach was also described in more detail, based upon the first two suggestions.

One evaluator suggested the addition of a section on basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). As this differentiation is, indeed, pertinent to teachers of ELLs, a brief description of BICS and CALP students was added to the section which was originally dedicated solely to the silent period. The concept of a silent period was a logical precursor to the concept of BICS and CALPS, and so these three ideas were combined to create the section entitled *Silent Periods, BICS, and CALP*.

The section titled *Safe Environment for Language Risk Taking* received attention from two evaluators, both of whom suggested that the guide be more explicit in how to include ELL students in the community of the classroom. Upon further discussion, concrete examples of how to engage culturally and linguistically diverse students, and native English speakers into a classroom community were added to this section.

A myriad of additional strategies were suggested by the peer evaluators. These included games and activities, dialogues, jazz chants, storytelling, music, songs, role playing, charted songs, poems, and writing samples, and experiential teaching. However, one evaluator stated that "These [teaching methods] can be as numerous and creative as the teachers themselves."

The feedback provided by the participants at the presentation was also positive, and many participants noted that the demonstration of the implementation of the strategies gave them a "feel for sitting in a classroom taught in another language." Additionally, several of the participants indicated that the visuals and materials were purposeful.

One participant pointed out that, though the ideal peer tutors are academically proficient, it is important that they also be willing to assume the role of peer tutor. This participant indicated that many teachers assign the role of peer tutor to the Talented and/or Gifted (TAG) students in the class in order to both challenge the tutor and enhance the understanding of the ELL. However, many TAG students grow to resent the task if it is assigned frequently, and neither the tutor nor the ELL benefit. This is an important point, as the description in the guide states that "a friendly, sensitive student" would make a good peer tutor. Many teachers might immediately assign this role to the TAG students, without regard to the students' willingness to participate.

Another comment made during the presentation related the guidebook to the teaching of Special Education students. This participant proposed that these strategies are effective means of teaching Special Education students, as well. This idea is discussed in the section titled Recommendations for Future Research and Study.

Project Summary

The purpose of the project was to create a guide for teachers who teach or anticipate teaching linguistically diverse student populations. This guide was distributed among teacher education students and professors at a university in the Rocky Mountain Region. With a large and growing population of English Language Learners in the U.S. school system, bilingual and English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers alone cannot meet the educational needs of such large populations (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). Students with limited English proficiency are increasingly forced out of specialized instruction and into the mainstream classroom. Thus, regular classroom teachers are regularly faced with the task of educating students of different linguistic backgrounds,

many of whom are new or emergent English language learners. Although information on teaching ELLs in the regular classroom is abundant, there is a lack of clear, user friendly, practical guides for teachers. As a result, millions of elementary school teachers feel confused, overwhelmed, and unduly challenged. Through extensive research in the areas of second language acquisition, the history of education for linguistic minorities, and current trends in educating ELLs, a guide was developed which presented research-based strategies which pertain to elementary teachers. The guide was met with enthusiasm, and is available to educators who anticipate working with linguistically diverse student populations.

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APPENDIX A

Peer Evaluation and Participant Feedback Forms

Teaching the English Language Learner in the Regular Elementary Classroom

By Victoria Woolford

Peer Evaluation Form

Evaluated by _____
Date_____

Thank you for taking the time to read and evaluate my Research Project. As an expert in the field of Education and in English Language Learning, your thoughts, suggestions, and opinions are highly valuable in making my project as accurate and functional as possible. Please answer the following questions with utmost honesty, as the purpose of this evaluation is to improve my project, and feedback will be applied to the project. Again, thank you for your time and effort in evaluating this project.

1. The goal of the project is to provide a practical guide for teachers who have English Language Learners in their classrooms. Is there any part of the project that you feel is not relevant to current elementary school teachers? If so, how should these items be changed, or do you feel they should be deleted altogether?
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

2. Were any parts of the guide unclear or difficult to understand due to word choice or format? If so, please explain.
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____
   _____

3. To your knowledge, were any parts of the guide inaccurate to? If so, how should these items be changed, or do you feel they should be deleted altogether?

4. Are there any strategies or strategies to avoid that should be added to the guide? If so, please explain.

5. Are there any additional resources that could be used to enhance this project? If so, please list.

6. Please provide any additional feedback or comments in this space.

Participant Feedback Form

SEMINAR EVALUATION: July 28, 2007

Thank you for your feedback! It will assist in making this a quality experience.

Please use the following scale: 4=excellent, 3=good, 2=average, 1=weak

……

Session Name:_____ Session Time:_____

Session Presenter(s):_____

The presenter's knowledge of this topic was:

The overall presentation of this topic was:

The relevance of this topic to your education was:

The materials used in this session were:

The time allocated to this session was:

Comments/Suggestions for Future Sessions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

APPENDIX B

Guidebook