Fostering Academic Proficiency in ESL in Elementary Education

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FOSTERING ACADEMIC PROFICIENCY IN ESL IN ELEMENTARY EDUCATION

by

Mary Elizabeth Sharp

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SECOND LANGUAGE TEACHING

Approved:

UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY
Logan, Utah

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ABSTRACT

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Utah State University, 2012

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This portfolio was written for the Master of Second Language Teaching Program (MSLT). It consists of the author’s personal teaching philosophy as it relates to teaching ESL (English as a Second Language). It includes papers that demonstrate the author’s beliefs on teaching English as a Second Language especially academic language instruction. It includes the author’s personal teaching philosophy as it relates to teaching ESL. This is followed by three artifacts: the value of children’s literature in English as a second language instruction, navigating academic language, and asking clarifying questions. The portfolio also includes a research proposal, the impact of audio-book read along, as a home component on second language (L2) Literacy. It concludes with an annotated bibliography of works that have influenced the author’s teaching philosophy.

“The Value of Children’s Literature in English as a Second Language Instruction” demonstrates the author’s belief that literature should have a place in the L2 classroom. It discusses the many benefits the use of literature can have including bolstering students’ background knowledge and building a rich vocabulary. “Navigating Academic Language” discusses the need for L2 learners to develop their academic English
proficiency to promote their success in school. “The Importance of Clarification Requests in SLA (Second Language Acquisition)” stresses the importance of L2 learners gaining clarification on problem utterances they encounter in their academic classes to assist them in their academic as well as linguistic development.

The final paper, “The Impact of Audio-Book Read Along as a Home Component on L2 Literacy” is a research proposal. The research would seek to understand the benefits of an audio-book program. This would help determine if the costs of setting up an audio-book library would be academically beneficial for this population of students.

All portions of this portfolio support the author’s belief that the academic success of L2 learners is closely linked to their language and cultural proficiency in L2. And as a result of this belief, L2 teaching should have a strong academic component. The portfolio concludes with an annotated bibliography, a collection of works that have influenced the author’s teaching philosophy.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many thanks to my family for their respect for education, their encouragement, examples, as well as their expectation that I pursue higher educational goals. Thanks to my committee members Joshua Thoms and Sylvia Read for their time and expertise in education and teaching methods, with a special thanks to my committee chair Karin de Jonge-Kannan for all of her tireless efforts on my behalf. Thanks to all the educational mentors during my years of teaching, who encouraged me and gave me the autonomy and support needed to learn the art of teaching. And, finally thanks to the many ESL students who have inspired me with their love for learning, their hard work, and their resilient spirits.

M. Elizabeth Sharp
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INTRODUCTION TO PORTFOLIO

This portfolio is a compilation of papers written by the author during the MSLT program. Its purpose is to present her teaching philosophy on teaching ESL (English as a Second Language) but also teaching ESL within the regular education setting. It specifically highlights where her philosophy agrees with current second language acquisition (SLA) research. Three artifacts and a research proposal, which all support that teaching philosophy, are followed by an annotated bibliography of works which have impacted the author’s teaching beliefs.
TEACHING PHILOSOPHY
Apprenticeship Of Observation

As I reflect on my experiences as a student -- what I enjoyed about school, what I hated about school -- I realize they can all be linked to one critical factor, the teacher. Of course, both painful and positive memories stem from peer relationships, subject matter, personal health issues, my skills and abilities, as well as interest in subject matter, and other issues separate from the teacher. However, regardless of these influences, which did affect my overall attitude towards school, I believe my teachers had a large influence on how I coped as a student in every aspect of schooling.

If a teacher was stressed about my progress, I was stressed. If the teacher vocalized worries about how I interacted with other students, I worried. If the teacher demonstrated disgust about my lack of interest in a subject, I rebelled and was sure to show even less interest and attention. If I sensed teachers didn’t find meaning in a course or assignment, I put even less effort and priority than they. In contrast, if the teacher was confident that I would eventually succeed in all areas of education despite interest or skill, I also was confident I would succeed.

My education started in a British/American school in the Middle East. The majority of the students spoke English or Arabic. The population was a mix of Syrian Nationals and students like me whose parents were working overseas for their governments or for big companies. What I remember from my kindergarten experience is playing on the school grounds. I remember trying to catch the little
green lizards that sat on the wall surrounding the school. Once, a lizard's tail popped off, which I believe may have cured me from catching lizards. I also remember collecting the little round pinecones that grew in the school grounds and playing on top of a playhouse that I believe was just outside the kindergarten door.

I don't remember anything about the curriculum or my teacher. I do know that I was one of three students who spoke English in my kindergarten class. Even though the majority of the class spoke Arabic, I have no recollection of learning in anything but English. I assume the class was taught in both Arabic and English, and that there was very little attempt to link the two languages as I learned no Arabic and I believe the other students learned little if any English during that year. I was comfortable in the class despite the language barrier that must have existed between my peers and me.

After my experience in Kindergarten, school was taught only in English. I spent one more academic year in the Middle East. The population at school was culturally diverse, but at school I only heard English. I'm not sure how language was taught; it all seemed very natural. I think the same should hold true for ESL students: the more natural teachers can make the acquisition of language, the better. I believe that students developing language should not be over corrected. Just as my beginning attempts at writing were obviously not a traumatic experience since I have no recollection of them, ESL students should be encouraged in their efforts, and their growth should feel natural and not forced.
The remainder of my grade school years were spent in the U.S. My second grade teacher had rats, and made me write with a triangular shaped pencil to improve my pencil grip and handwriting. In third grade my classmates and I wrote many stories and then we illustrated them. The teacher bound them into a book. My fourth grade teacher accused me of cheating on a test and ripped up my friend’s test. That year I remember getting homework and thinking it wasn’t going to be worth my time so I just kept piling it up in my desk. My fourth grade teacher didn’t like me and I didn’t like her. My fifth grade teacher had us memorize poetry and put on a Shakespeare play! I think I was a pretty normal kid, I liked the teachers who liked me and was good for them. However, if I didn’t like a subject, I behaved poorly. I liked to play and hated homework.

Mostly, what I remember from my early schooling was the things I loved, such as animals and creative projects. In Jr. High, my classes became more academically challenging, and some subjects became difficult for me, especially math. I also started taking elective classes, such as Art and Spanish. My math teacher took me out of Art to have me sit in math for an additional period. I was heartbroken, but it did help me with my math. When I took Spanish, I remember filling in lots of workbook pages, learning weekly vocabulary lists, and watching The Three Amigos in Spanish. At the end of the quarter I had absorbed a few Spanish vocabulary words like: silla, leche, and hola. I would classify the method of language acquisition in this class as rote memorization. While some excel at rote memorization, I do not. I concluded at the end of this class that I did not have a gift for learning foreign
languages and was never interested in signing up for a language class again. By contrast, my native language was taught in my other classes through reading, writing, and discussing new vocabulary as it came up in the curriculum.

In college, I was required to take American Sign Language. I was surprised at how much I enjoyed the classes and how much I could absorb in one semester. It was so different from my previous experiences with language classes. I decided to take Sign 2 and then the following lab. My professors as well as lab directors had us practice telling stories, translating favorite songs, and just communicating with each other in ASL. It did not take long before we felt safe trying to express ourselves despite our limited vocabulary. It was this authentic use of language that enabled us to build our vocabulary as well as improve our syntax.

Although I did not pursue ASL after my first three classes, I felt more confident that if I needed to learn a language, it was possible, even for me. When I was hired the following year as an ESL teacher with no experience in ESL, I took with me that attitude that all of my students, like me, would be fine. I also strove to make the development of language as authentic and natural as possible. I tried to help students develop their vocabulary and syntax on an as-needed basis. I liked to include fun and creative activities that helped to develop language proficiency because I wanted my students to enjoy the process and not be too stressed. The district had its own direct instruction program that was highly focused on rote memorization, and I often felt overwhelmed by the limitations of the programs and the immediate language needs of my students. Because of my recent experience
watching master teachers teach me language, I put the program away at times and tried to focus on my students’ immediate language needs.

I compare my experience in teaching ESL to my experience as a student. There is a great deal of pressure on my students to develop their L2 skills so that they can have immediate access to academic content, whereas my academic content was always taught in my first and only language. However, I want their education and language development to feel as natural as possible for them. I do not expect mastery of any one aspect of language before covering more curriculum. If my students are communicating effectively in their L2 at a certain level, it is time to begin teaching them at the next level and not waste time waiting for mastery. This is how native and non-native speakers develop their language skills.

Although I did love teaching ESL, I was frustrated that I did not have a stronger educational background in the area and felt pretty unqualified, so when another position opened up I took it. My next job was as a reading and math intervention specialist. My emphasis in college was titled Severe Disabilities, so I felt like I had the training for this special education job.

I chose to get my master’s degree in Second Language Teaching after I started my job as the intervention specialist. The principal of my new school knew I was ESL endorsed and asked me to teach their ESL classes in addition to the reading and math intervention. I needed to choose a master’s program, and decided that if I was going to be teaching ESL, that I should get the education that would help me with this portion of my job. Even now that I am teaching in a regular education
classroom, I think that having an understanding of SLA and teaching is critical for public school teachers. L2 learners are a growing population in our public schools and I feel it is critical for me as their teacher to have an understanding of the research and best practices for this population of students.
Professional Environment

My bachelor's degree was in elementary education with an emphasis in severe disabilities. I have worked as a full-time ESL teacher and a full time intervention specialist. ESL fell under that broad intervention umbrella, along with math, reading and behavior intervention. I have now also taught fifth and first grade. I have enjoyed working with grade school children, specifically, English language learners. I plan on continuing to teach grade school students in the United States.

Currently employed as a first grade teacher, I look forward to applying the skills learned in the MSLT program to teaching language skills in the regular education classroom. I expect to have many ESL students in my regular education classes, and will use many of the techniques learned during my coursework, as well as past teaching experiences, to assist me in teaching language and content in ways accessible to these students. With the knowledge about best practice that I have gained in this program, as well as the practical skill I have learned while teaching ESL populations, I hope to be able to better prepare all my students for academic success in English.
Introduction:

A teacher must ensure that the material presented in her class is adequately modified to foster the academic achievement and proficiency of all her students given that “English language learners represent a rapidly growing, culturally, linguistically diverse student population in the United States” (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004, p. 4). Proficiency in English has the potential to prepare English Language Learners (ELLs) for future opportunities (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). It is critical, then, that ELL students be provided quality English instruction. Assignments should maximize their language and academic growth and should be such that all members of the class can complete them correctly on their own academic level without excessive assistance.

When developing appropriate curriculum, equal emphasis should be placed on social, personal, and intellectual development (Igoa, 1995). This is best accomplished when the L2 teacher is able to validate students’ background and culture, foster academic proficiency in English, use appropriate assessment measures, a communicative language approach, and participate in continued professional development. To better understand each of these components, it is now necessary to examine each area in more depth.
Validating Student Background/Culture

Validating Language Differences

English as a Second Language (ESL) is taught in many ways: in a dual language classroom (Freeman, Freeman, & Mercuri, 2005); in the regular education classroom; pull-out ESL; and various other combinations (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). Regardless of the program, many critical factors must be kept in mind when designing appropriate English curriculum. The first factor, validating students’ background and experiences, is particularly important in effective curriculum design. Shrum and Glisan (2010) point out that, “In many cases, the difficulties that minority students face seem insurmountable when the students are placed in classrooms that stress total conformity to the majority culture” (2010, p. 366). Part of a L2 teacher’s job is helping students become successful navigators not only in the L2, but in the target society and culture as well. As stated by Gaitan, “When students experience discontinuity between their home and school languages, values or expectations, it may interfere with their learning. However, the school is also responsible for teaching students different kinds of experiences” (Gaitan, 2006, p. 48).

While the primary focus of an ESL teacher’s job description is teaching English, Shrum and Glisan (2010) claim that, “maintaining the HL [heritage language] while learning a new language enriches the academic and cultural experience of the learner and the society” (Shrum & Glisan, p. 372). Links to students’ L1 should and
can be made throughout the curriculum, and will facilitate language and academic development (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). While it may not always be possible for ESL teachers to provide HL instruction, they should always validate HL development, as well as the students’ cultural background (Igoa, 1995).

Validating Cultural Background

A L2 classroom is often made up of students coming from a variety of cultural backgrounds with different academic or cultural perspectives (Gaitan, 2006; Igoa, 1995; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005) and, often, minority students are identified as ‘at risk’ of academic failure. “At-risk students are those who are likely to fail due to circumstances beyond their control (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 366). Students with a strong sense of cultural identity perform better in their academic pursuits (Gaitan, 2006). In contrast, the loss of cultural identity, and unkind or unwelcoming reception when they enter school, compound the other risk factors many of these students face (Gaitan, 2006; Igoa, 1995; Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

One’s cultural identity is multifaceted. “Some of the factors that contribute in varying degrees to cultural identity are ethnicity, geographical region, national origin, social class [...] religion, gender and age” (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006, p. 179). But whatever the factors that play into cultural identity, teachers “…need to prepare all children, minority and majority to participate equitably in a culturally pluralistic society” (p. 191). This can be done by always presenting culturally important beliefs of any student’s family background as intrinsically valid, without
casting only the beliefs of the new culture as intrinsically right. Activities that can promote cultural identity include reading and writing about one’s home and culture (Gaitan, 2006).

Young children are often caught off guard by external displays of culture. During my time as a teacher, there have been many instances where it has been necessary to discuss various cultural norms related to dress, gender roles, and behavior. When addressing these differences with my students, we simply have a conversation about those cultural norms using the students as experts in their own culture. Sometimes the class can find parallel customs, and sometimes I just have to say that things can have different meanings in different cultures. I think that these conversations assist all students by drawing on their strengths and serving to make them aware and more accepting of differences.

Culture as a part of the Curriculum

Where it is difficult to define culture, for the purposes of this paper culture is the beliefs and values that determine the way people think and interact in their communities (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). That being said, it is important to validate (Shrum & Glisan, 2010), learn, and teach with students’ cultural values in mind (Gaitan, 2006; Igoa, 1995). Linking the curriculum to the students’ own background experiences will improve their abilities to more fully access and grasp the curriculum (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005; Shrum & Glisan 2000).
It is also a teacher's responsibility to help students build the ability to succeed in their personal lives outside of school as well as their academic lives in school. "A culturally conscious style of teaching involves creating very direct links between students' community life outside the classroom and the lessons they experience in the classroom" (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005, p. 154). This will involve the teaching of cultural and social awareness, as well as how to approach misunderstandings in their new surroundings. According to Grant and Sleeter (2007), appropriate problem solving and conflict resolution skills may seem instinctual, but "children do not automatically know how to make it work" (p. 109), and therefore, need to have the required skills taught (Grant & Sleeter, 2007). I believe that students who are successful in their ability to relate to others will be more successful in their future academic and professional careers.

A L2 teacher must take the cultural differences and perspectives of the students into account when providing instruction (Gaitan, 2006; Igoa, 1995). But even that is not sufficient. Richard-Amato and Snow (2005) recommend explicitly teaching culture rules and discussing intersecting cultures as a means of reinforcing cultural identity as well as assisting students in the development of new culture or cultural understanding (2005).

The classroom atmosphere should encourage students in their development of social skills, personal interests, values, and an understanding attitude toward differences among and within cultures (Igoa, 1995). According to Gaitan, "in order to
create culturally inclusive classrooms, the students’ family and community contexts need to be integrated into the instructional context” (2006, p. 4).

When teaching with different perspectives in mind, it is important that the teacher not shy away from teaching culture and cultural significance to students. Acceptance and sensitivity to cultural differences should be an integral part of language instruction (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Students may need the insights of their teacher, or carefully selected literature (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005), to gain the cultural understanding necessary to interact successfully within and across cultures.

I believe teachers must not overlook problems dealing with diversity. Rather, they need to tackle them immediately and use them as an invitation to teach. They should welcome students’ experiences and input (Igoa, 1995), encourage comparisons of cultures while being careful not to promote stereotypes (Shrum & Glisan, 2010), and include literature with a cultural focus (Shrum & Glisan, 2010) to assist students in their understanding of culture. As a result, the focus of the entire class should expand to include an understanding and appreciation of others, which will assist students of all backgrounds to become culturally competent and more capable of approaching problems in unfamiliar cultures.

Sometimes I prepare a lesson with a culture component, but other times because of questions that come up in class we stop to discuss the meaning and make comparisons between cultures. For example, a girl from India came to class with henna tattoos on her hands; she looked ashamed as the other students asked her why she would tattoo her body. It was a perfect time to talk about culture and
customs. I began the discussion by sharing my experiences as a girl living around many Indians, and my basic understanding of henna tattoos in the Indian culture. I then asked the student to verify and correct my understanding. She immediately cheered up and taught the class the purposes and uses for henna. We then compared what she was sharing about her culture to American culture. The discussion resulted in the student having her culture validated, and the rest of the class having the opportunity to compare cultures and think critically.

Social Skills and Personal Development

It is important for a teacher to be equally concerned with students' academic and cultural competence as with their personal development and growth. Schools often focus on the linguistic development of LLs; “this focus can limit their opportunities for succeeding socially and economically in the future” (Richard-Amato, & Snow, 2005, p. 18). Teachers should want their students to become successful adults, which will require them to navigate academic, cultural, social, and ethical situations. Willis states:

As teenagers transition to young adults they struggle to find their personal identities, values, and goals, teachers can help by providing opportunities for them to build their skills of analysis, critical thinking, and judgment in academic areas. The frontal lobe executive functions that students use to think critically and analytically and to prioritize and organize in their school subjects are the same higher thinking skills that can help them make good decisions when faced with the emotional stressors and ethical dilemmas of their lives outside the classroom. (Willis, 2006, p. 70)
Students should be able to experience success throughout the educational process, no matter their academic, linguistic, or cultural background. As stated by Shrum and Glisan (2005), these differing groups of students “are capable of achieving academic objectives in their classrooms when their needs are met” (p. 1). Teaching with different perspectives in mind will help teachers reach all students, but they should also be preparing students to employ different perspectives. Education should enrich students’ lives in and out of school. I believe it is the teacher’s job to adapt the curriculum for the students so that they can improve and experience success inside and outside of the L2 classroom, throughout their educational journey.

Supporting Academic Development

Academic Language

Shrum and Glisan claim that minority students without sufficient support are at risk of academic failure (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 366). Effective L2 teachers adapt and differentiate curriculum presentation as well as assessment to meet the specific needs of individual students and promote their academic and language growth. Content area instruction needs to be adapted when it occurs solely in a student’s L2 in order to make the content accessible (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). As L2 students work to gain academic understanding in an unfamiliar language, it is critical that teachers provide them with the language support they need to fully
access the academic content. "...To accomplish success in academic settings, Cummins claims that heritage learners need Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency or the ability to read, write and understand formal academic language" (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Academic language proficiency is fostered by teaching learning strategies, reading strategies, especially for discipline-specific writing, (Richard-Amato & Snow), and comprehension strategies (Alverman, Swafford, & Montero, 2004). When applied, these learning strategies can lead to greater opportunities in English.

As stated by Shrum and Glisan, "learning to use English will result in greater access to education and employment opportunities" (2010, p. 371). Yet, "English Language Learners are one of the largest groups of students who struggle with literacy in general and vocabulary and comprehension in particular" (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004, p. 8). As students are given opportunities and support to develop and practice their oral language proficiency in L2 classrooms, they should also be practicing, building, and improving their ability to create and comprehend written language in its various forms. This prepares them for becoming fully literate and academically successful in their L2.

Adapting the curriculum will make it more motivating and enable greater accessibility and retention of content. Adapting and differentiating instruction is effective for all students when curriculum and instruction are specifically designed to meet the individual needs of each student (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). When assessing a student's understanding of various concepts in a curriculum in a L2, it is
unlikely traditional assessments will result in accurate and useful information about student knowledge (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004, p. 2). Therefore, it is critical that presentation, assignments, and assessments be adapted to better meet the language needs of ELLs.

The use of authentic assessments with all students, but especially with ELLs is recommended (Grant & Sleeter 2007; O’Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996). Authentic assessments describe, “the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities” (p. 4). It is critical that students can demonstrate on assessments what they know and can do (O’Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996). This may be a task-based assessment, model drawing, or the creation of a piece of writing.

**Adapting Curriculum to Allow for Accessibility and Retention**

Academic definitions of new vocabulary may not enable a L2 student to store and access the newly presented material, especially if the concepts as well as the vocabulary are new to the student. Teachers need to modify presentation to engage students with multiple learning strengths (Grant & Sleeter, 2007; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). I believe that teachers who instruct solely with oral directions and definitions would be teaching to the beginning level ELL students’ greatest weakness. That is why simply repeating the misunderstood directions does not necessarily result in student understanding.
Instead, teachers should be demonstrating, drawing, or otherwise providing visual and tactile cues to support unfamiliar vocabulary and concepts. This allows the teacher to access and use the students’ strengths, making the content available to the students “... at the same time that they provide a linguistically appropriate environment” (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006, p. 244). This should be done in connection with effective strategies to promote and increase students’ abilities to think and solve problems in English (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005).

Teachers also need to provide opportunities for students to connect new material with information they already know (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Connecting new material to students’ background will help students to move new concepts or vocabulary into their long-term memory (Willis, 2006). A person’s long-term memory can be more effectively accessed if learning involves most or all of a student’s senses (Willis, 2006).

When they draw diagrams, create models, and engage their sight, hearing, smell, touch, or movement, they are making connections between the new information and something they already know. They are engaging multiple brain pathways, and increasing the likelihood of memory storage and effective retrieval. (Willis, 2006, p. 22)

Teachers should model methods of connecting new information and vocabulary to prior knowledge by drawing diagrams and making comparisons with the students, and then encouraging students to do the same (Willis, 2006).

Novelty is an important factor in information retention. The use of techniques such as movement and humor can add novelty to a lesson, which will
increase the likelihood that the information is stored (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Using activities that are multisensory or involve novelty will increase task motivation (Shrum & Glisan). Rather than just lecturing on a subject, if the class can actually experiment or play with the content, students will be more motivated to participate in learning.

Adapting Curriculum to Allow for Student Motivation

With an effective teacher who adapts and differentiates the curriculum to meet the needs of her students, I believe that every student can, and should, find success. “If students find the course interesting, and relevant to their needs, and if they experience success and satisfaction in that success, they are motivated to participate and to persist” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001 p. 15).

Likewise, students will be more engaged in assignments that allow for individual creativity and reflect the student’s personality.

When students feel ownership of their work, it ensures that the work will be intrinsically motivating and rewarding. When a student is engaged, not only in the presented information but in the following assignments, learning will be maximized. “Students are more engaged when they are interested in the information available for them to learn” (Willis, 2006, p.42). I have found that communicative writing assignments are highly motivating because they give students a means for creative expression. “Providing a student with opportunities to write not only improves their
writing, but also promotes second language acquisition” (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001, p. 205).

**Adapting Curriculum to allow for Multiple Instructional Strategies**

The brain stores new information most effectively if it is used often and in various real-life scenarios (Shrum & Glisan, 2010; Willis, 2006). The teacher should provide many different ways to use newly acquired knowledge for authentic tasks, or tasks with meaning outside of the classroom (Parsons & Ward, 2011), to assist in retention. It is for this reason that the use of multiple instructional strategies is so important in SLA.

A teacher can help students maximize learning through the effective use of multiple instructional strategies. In fact, activities that involve multiple senses are the most engaging and likely to be remembered (Willis, 2006). According to Shrum and Glisan (2010), “whether in infancy or childhood, language processing involves many senses and an enriched environment” (p. 77). What this means to language teachers is that teaching and activities that involve multiple senses are crucial when building a language curriculum.

I believe that the use of multiple instructional strategies is the best way to meet the needs of students collectively as well as individually. The use of multiple instructional strategies will assist students by exposing them to different ways of teaching and learning (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). This will help students as they prepare
to use the L2 outside of a language classroom, as well as keep the curriculum appropriate and interesting to individual students (Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

Assessing Student Knowledge

In SLA, students should be expected to make errors. Errors are a necessary part of language acquisition, regardless of whether it is a first or second language (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Tasks and assignments should not be expected to be error free. Assignments need to be appropriate for the variety of language and academic levels that will appear in a class of students. Despite errors, assignments should provide teachers with useful information about a student's understanding. While it is easy to fall into the trap of giving worksheets that can be easily graded and scored, worksheets do not lend themselves well to adaptation or provide the teacher with valuable information about a student's conceptual understanding (Burns, 2007).

Traditional assessments such as a multiple-choice test (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996) or tests given in a language the student does not understand are not likely to result in accurate and useful information about student knowledge (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004). Therefore, the best way to assess student comprehension is to test not just for the right answers but for the accompanying explanations of their reasoning. If teachers are looking only for right answers, students who lack conceptual understanding may fall through the cracks, since it is possible to correctly memorize steps or answers without a conceptual understanding of the function of
those steps (Burns, 2007). If teachers test for conceptual understanding upfront, they will prevent unhappy surprises when it comes to final tests and will reduce the amount of remediation required later in a student's academic career.

The most appropriate assessments tap into students' thought processes (Burns, 2007). Assignments that require students to articulate their understanding orally or in writing, to explain their reasoning strengthen and improve their language skills. These types of assessments not only give the teacher insights into students' understanding of academic concepts and how students' language skills are developing, they in themselves provide meaningful real-life application and practice of developing skills.

It is for these reasons that O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce recommend the use of authentic assessments with this population. Authentic assessments describe, "the multiple forms of assessment that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation, and attitudes on instructionally-relevant classroom activities" (1996, p. 4). I often encourage my students to provide connections orally from content or reading to their lives. In my classes, we often journal and illustrate math or science concepts. This also allows me to see to what extent the students understand and can relate the new concept to their lives, and how their understanding changes and deepens over time.

Shrum and Glisan (2010) explain that authentic assessments are "the type of assessment that mirrors the tasks and challenges faced by individuals in the real world" (Shrum & Glisan, p. 399). They recommend a combination of formative and
summative assessments that provide useful information about what the students can do, which should in turn drive instruction. These can include performance assessments, which encourage creativity in responses and can be adapted to meet the needs of the class (O’Malley & Pierce, 1996; Shrum & Glisan, 2010), such as a portfolio of student work (O’Malley & Pierce; Peregoy & Boyle, 2001).

Communicative Language

Just as assessments are more effective when they mirror real-life usage, language and literacy skills should be explicitly taught within the natural use of language. “The ability to verbalize a language rule does not signify that the language learner can use it in communication” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 20). Instead, explicit teaching and the provision of practice opportunities along with real-life applications will help students recognize and use language, for communicative purposes, across settings and mediums. The teaching of language should always have the purpose of communication of ideas not only as a final goal but as the method for instruction all along the way (Gibbons, 2002; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). In fact, “communication is a vehicle for acquisition” (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001, p. 25).

This being the case, language should not be taught as micro skills that can be drilled, or by the decomposition of sentences: “mechanical grammar practice is not
beneficial for language acquisition” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 17). Instead, meaning should be the first focus (Ovando, Combs, & Collier, 2006). The language skills needed to communicate are developed in actual language use for communicative purposes (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). Communicative, task-based activities (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001), as well as activities that connect learning to students’ knowledge outside of school (Alvermann, Swafford, & Montero, 2004) contribute positively to students’ motivation to study language. And, as previously discussed, motivation improves the acquisition and retention of knowledge.

Many errors are made as students attempt more and more complicated sentences (Ballman, Liskin-Gasparro, & Mandell, 2001). Error correction should be kept to a minimum when the goal is language acquisition (Shrum & Glisan, 2010). As students’ language and literacy skills improve, the teacher’s expectations of their oral and written performance should also increase, as can the amount or sophistication of error correction. In this way, learning a L2 follows a natural sequence.

**Teachers’ Responsibility for Professional Development**

Professional development is viewed as one of the most effective ways of improving teaching and learning (Eun & Heining-Boynton, 2012; Lutrick & Sxabo, 2012). According to Burkman (2012) professional development is needed to
promote successful teaching, especially during first years of teaching. However, teachers are servicing an ever-changing student population. Additionally, many teachers feel unprepared to service students with special educational and behavioral needs (Burkman, 2012).

Responsible ESL teachers realize the magnitude of their job, not only teaching language skills but also assisting students in their preparation to become successful in and outside of the language classroom. They recognize that they can always improve their teaching in one of these areas. Therefore, teachers must continue their professional education in order to prepare them to meet the needs of their population.

Each population of students will have different needs and different background experiences; to assume that a teacher has taught one group of students and that will prepare her to teach another group of students is just not true. In fact, the populations of students that are being taught currently come with significantly different backgrounds, languages, cultures, and perspectives (Eun & Heining-Boynton, 2007). These differences “create unprecedented demands for teachers to develop knowledge and skills, to meet the new challenges in their classrooms” (Uen & Heining-Boynton, 2007, p. 36).

A teacher needs to be able to recognize the differing needs of a population and seek out opportunities to better prepare herself to meet those needs. Different needs may surface with each new year of students. Igoa (1995) states: “with every
group of students who enter my classroom each year, I start all over and we "paint" a new "picture", "write" a new story - our class picture and story - as we interact, learn and grow" (p. 7). This can be done by getting to know her students (lgoa), continuing her education, completing degrees/certifications, attending conferences, reading articles and conferencing with other educators, in order to continue to fine-tune and adapt her curriculum and presentation to meet the needs of any given group of students.

**Conclusion:**

Every student should be respected and cherished. Every student can learn, and has individual needs and styles of learning. I believe that students should be encouraged to participate in and experience success in various forms of creative and academic expression. A classroom should celebrate learning in all areas, and on all levels, to build a healthy and vibrant environment.

Students come to school with various strengths. To ensure that all students learn, the teacher must be prepared to adapt content, curriculum, and assessment measures to meet each child’s specific needs. “A sign of a good teacher is the ability to flex one’s teaching style to better fit the needs of those being taught” (Shrum & Glisan, 2010, p. 354). It is critical that teachers of L2 students be able to adapt curriculum to fit learners' individual language as well as academic needs. Not only are presentation of curriculum and assignments important, the assessments must be adapted to better meet the language needs of English language learners.
LITERATURE ARTIFACT

THE VALUE OF CHILDREN'S LITERATURE IN ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION
Introduction to Literature Artifact

The following paper was written for LING 6800, Literature in the L2/Foreign Language Classroom. I was excited about the topic, because I had used literature in my classes when teaching ESL. Literature was a highly motivating activity for many of my students who, although in the upper-elementary grades, had never been allowed to read grade-appropriate texts. They were embarrassed by the phonics-based texts they were required or encouraged to check out of the library. They were required to read these books for the purpose of improving their reading test scores. But I found the novels we read together in class were an excellent medium to teach reading comprehension strategies.
The Value of Children’s Literature in English as a Second Language Instruction

Introduction

Children’s literature includes a vast variety of genres. Countless picture books, novels, poems, rhymes, and songs have been written specifically for children of all ages. The purpose of children’s literature can be to inform and teach, or simply to entertain. Whatever its genre and purpose, children’s literature, when selected appropriately, can have a positive impact on the development of literacy and other language skills among language learners.

Good things happen to students who read a great deal in the new language. Research studies show they become better and more confident readers, they write better, their listening and speaking abilities improve, and their vocabularies get richer. In addition, they develop positive attitudes toward and increased motivation to study the new language (Bamford & Day, 2004, p. 1).

Many argue for the use of authentic literature in schooling. Authentic literature has been defined as, “a text originally created to fulfill a social purpose in the second language community for which it was intended” (Crosley, Louwerse, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007, p. 17). This can mean anything from a simple recipe or advertisement to a more complex informative article or novel (Crosley, Louwerse, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007).
Benefits for differentiating instruction

ELLs on many different levels can appreciate authentic literature. At the beginning levels of language development, students may appreciate only the pictures or the sounds of the language. "When word knowledge is limited, readers rely on other cues to help figure out the meaning of text. This utilitarian function of illustration is extremely helpful" (Vardell, Hadaway & Young, 2006, p. 735). As language skills develop, students begin to grasp the storyline and characters, and eventually students understand and appreciate the nuances and humor that can be found in writing. It is for this reason that many children's books are still loved by adults.

Appropriate use of literature in the ESL classroom offers effective ways of meeting the varied language needs of ELLs and will assist in their development on all academic levels (Bamford & Day, 2004). Four specific academic advantages of using children's literature can be identified: increased vocabulary retention, the development of critical thinking skills, increased student motivation, and curriculum support.

Students who are limited in English require explicit teaching in vocabulary (Vardell, Hadaway & Young, 2006). Immigrant students are required to learn conversational as well as academic language in a matter of months, or at most a few years from first entering the public school systems if they wish to comprehend and learn academic content (Vardell, Hadaway, & Young, 2006). Vocabulary must be
taught explicitly to this group of students. However, many traditional methods of teaching vocabulary are not appropriate when using explicit teaching methods.

Vocabulary taught as a separate micro-skill by memorizing lists of words occurring outside of authentic context is an ineffective way of improving the student’s ability to recognize and interpret those words in natural language context. If the focus is on real-world use of the language, teaching explicitly means developing and using language in context (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). Breaking language into separate micro-skills (such as spelling, dictation, speaking, listening and writing) and drilling them separately are non-communicative functions of the language and impede meeting the purpose of communication (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005).

Students should be exposed to, and taught, the meaning of vocabulary they either encounter or could use in real-life situations. The vocabulary should be appropriate for their use in school, texts, or in the community. Authentic texts are an excellent source of commonly used, as well as subject specific, vocabulary.

Students who are ELLs will require effective and ongoing instruction in vocabulary and comprehension to improve their oral language skills and to increase the likelihood that they will read with meaning, and learn from text. Teachers have many opportunities throughout the day to provide structured instruction in vocabulary and comprehension to these students. One of the most available and valuable times is during storybook reading. (Vardell, Hadaway & Young, 2006, p. 728).

I have heard some teachers express reluctance to read picture books with older students. They may feel that the reading of children’s stories to language learners may appear demeaning or make the students feel that they are being
viewed as younger than they are. “It is counter-productive to restrict students to books targeted at their ages or grade levels. Sticking to books aimed at a student’s chronological age leads educators to overlook books that could be valuable resources” (Hadaway, 2009, p. 39). In many children’s non-fiction literature and picture books, rich content and themes are covered that can be appreciated even by adults. Non-fiction books offer excellent input for developing students’ background knowledge. They also provide an excellent steppingstone to more complicated grade-level textbook readings (Hadaway, 2009).

Children’s picture books, although written for children, are generally written to be read aloud to children by adults and are therefore written on a higher academic level and are rich with vocabulary. The teacher should explicitly cover key vocabulary used in the book to ensure the students are gaining targeted vocabulary by teaching it before the reading or as the vocabulary emerges in the story. After new vocabulary is read and then discussed as a class, with the teacher guiding the discussion, the students should immediately be provided with an opportunity to link it to something tangible and available to them, such as pictures. In children’s storybooks, texts are generally accompanied by illustrations, allowing students to connect new vocabulary not only to the story but to a visual representation as well. Thus, the illustrations provide academic support as well as an aesthetically pleasing and motivating visual representation of the text that appeal to various types of learners (Ghosn, 2002).
Storybooks are written on numerous levels and topics and should be selected by the teacher based on the vocabulary used as well as the students' language and intellectual level. Beginning students should be practicing basic English labeling skills. Many children's books talk about clothing, or objects in specific settings such as home, community, or school. These reinforce beginning vocabulary in an authentic and natural way (Vardell, Hadaway, & Young, 2006). These books also present a perfect opportunity to expand vocabulary, using questions such as: “What else do you see in this picture?” or “Tony's shirt is blue; what color is your shirt?”

Benefits for academic content

Some might argue that time is taken away from valuable content areas when emphasis is put on reading literature, and specifically picture books. It is true that there is a limited amount of time to cover an expansive curriculum, making students' academic instruction hours valuable because they are limited. It is important that the hours spent on instruction are geared to closing the academic gaps between ELLs and their native-speaking peers and preparing them to master core academic content.

ELL students often struggle in areas outside of oral communication. Many students who seem to have a grasp of social English still struggle in core content areas such as math, science, and language arts. They have not yet gained sufficient content-specific vocabulary or sufficiently practiced the critical thinking skills
needed to fully grasp academic content. Content area teachers need to teach language skills in their academic area (Brown, 2007). It is clear that time needs to be spent on vocabulary instruction (Brown, 2004). Literature helps students learn vocabulary definitions and absorb meaning. The more opportunities students have to apply their newly gained vocabulary initially, the more their ability will increase to retain the new words.

Teachers should support their academic content with read-alouds that cover the same topic. “Using a topic or theme to connect language learning and content, we can maximize the opportunity for the transfer of knowledge from one lesson to another. Literature is easily interwoven into this thematic approach” (Hadaway, Young, & Young, 2002, p. 32). Children’s books, whether they are picture books or beginning novels, cover a range of topics and themes (Hadaway, 2009). As the students’ language skills advance, teachers should begin selecting stories with more complicated vocabulary and themes that can help bolster their background knowledge and technical vocabulary. But it is important to remember that the selected literature should include no more than a few unfamiliar words so that students feel successful in what they are able to understand (Bamford & Day, 2004). Non-fiction books can be an excellent bridge to introducing concepts and for linking concepts understood in the first language to more technical vocabulary that is used in textbooks (Vardell, Hadaway, & Young, 2006).

Nonfiction children’s literature can be especially useful in spurring students’ interest in a core academic area, or preparing them for a textbook unit on a specific
subject. The more background experience in an area, the more the student will be able to draw on to link vocabulary and meaning. Children’s nonfiction literature is often presented in a child-friendly way. It generally covers one small area of a topic in depth, often with bright intriguing pictures to illustrate concepts. By reading such books, students gain vocabulary in a natural communicative setting, making it easier for the ELLs to comprehend and connect new vocabulary to prior knowledge (Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002).

However, when setting up themes around academic content, teachers should not restrict themselves to the use of nonfiction literature. Fiction, and all other genres, can be just as effective in building a theme and providing students with additional vocabulary links (Hadaway, Young, & Young, 2002). “In choosing fiction or folklore titles with a science connection... we can provide a story ‘hook’ that adds a personal dimension to the study of science and a complement or contrast to nonfiction selections” (Hadaway, Young, & Young, 2002, p. 32). For example, when studying environments, students may benefit from a narrative that occurs on a beach or in a forest. Students may more fully absorb the newly gained knowledge about environments due to the additional and different opportunity to apply this knowledge.

Thus, the use of the many genres of children’s literature can provide direct curriculum support, by providing extension activities to pre-teach or reinforce critical vocabulary. Each student comes to school with a unique educational history. Some ELLs have attended school previously in their native language; others may be
coming from a refugee situation, or a number of other backgrounds, which can leave enormous gaps in their formal and informal schooling. (Igoa, 2009; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005; Shrum & Glisan, 2010). By familiarizing students with a topic through a common reading, teachers provide common background knowledge in a specific academic area, regardless of students’ prior exposure to the subject outside of the classroom.

Some may argue for the use of specific texts and programs designed for language development. The vocabulary may be carefully selected and each lesson builds upon the next in sequential order. Such simplified texts, including those contrived to teach a single linguistic feature, can be a useful tool. However, students will not encounter this form of writing outside of language instruction, which could make it more difficult to discriminate important information in general-education classes. Language skills that are not easily applied elsewhere do little to improve students’ ability to communicate in other classes nor do they serve the needs of the ELLs.

**Benefits to student motivation**

Even as K-5 students may not directly see the application or value of grammar lessons and drills, they may find social or personal value in the reading and decomposition of authentic texts they may encounter in their regular classroom. “Many children’s books stylistically repeat format, sentence structure, vocabulary,
or content” and are “pleasing to read” (Hadaway, 2009, p. 39). While feeling like play, these books can serve the same function of practicing linguistic structures.

For students who are beginning readers or reading below the level of their peers, “some publishers use readability formulas, decodable text, and controlled vocabulary to create texts at lower reading levels - or adapt texts to such levels - these techniques often result in boring, stilted stories” (Hadaway, 2009, p. 39). ELLs do not want to talk about this type of writing with their peers on the playground. These students are interested and aware of the popular novels their native-speaking peers are reading in their reading classes; they too, want to be familiar with the popular characters of their day. As they read popular texts, ELLs will gain experience and knowledge of language structure and usage through personally motivating and meaningful input.

Beginning novels also fall into the broad category of children’s literature. When chosen appropriately, novels can be an excellent tool in building motivation and enjoyment in improving the L2. Many beginning readers light up when they begin their first chapter book or novel. Finishing a novel successfully is a monumental step in any language learners’ journey that brings with it a sense of accomplishment. Selecting literature for ELLs is a delicate process. If selected texts are so basic that the students can successfully read them on their own, they are probably not encountering enough new vocabulary to close the language gap with their peers. But if the vocabulary is too advanced, students will quickly become frustrated. Stumbling blocks common to language learners such as difficult syntax,
cultural elements, unfamiliar vocabulary, and complex storylines and themes need to be anticipated by the teacher and properly scaffolded for students' to prevent frustration (Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005).

Whereas successfully completing a novel can build students' confidence, the opposite can be true if we allow the students to fail in their attempts. Kooy and Chiu (1998) point out, “We cannot rely on the qualities of a text alone to engage the reader. The strategies used to pique students’ interest and prompt discussion are key to making literature an integral part of the English learning process” (p. 84). It is important that teachers assist language learners making their way through a novel.

Novels tell stories and are thus a motivating genre. Motivation is a critical aspect in language development, as it is in all areas of education. “The sustained human interest in a story over centuries, even millennia, is clear from the rich evidence of the epics, myths, legends, and folk tales that have thrilled, inspired, and entertained people since the times of Gilgamesh” (Ghosn, 2002, p. 173). When students begin a story, they are highly motivated to know how it resolves. The book then, becomes motivating in and of itself.

In a novel, students are exposed to new vocabulary in an authentic context. Novels often include a large amount of dialog occurring in a variety of social settings. This dialog can provide students with models of natural dialog in different settings without leaving the classroom. Appropriate discussion and scaffolding need to occur between teacher and student, as well as between students throughout the process of reading the novel to ensure that students are gaining from the reading
experience. This is accomplished when students and teacher link vocabulary with comprehension strategies. Inferences can be made based on what they already know about the plot and the characters; students can predict the meaning of unfamiliar words and immediately link the new vocabulary to a story and character they are familiar with. The strategies taught during reading can later be applied to academic reading as students gradually increase their critical thinking and problem solving skills (Ghosn, 2002).

**Benefits for culture instruction**

L2 learners may struggle with inadequate background knowledge in the L2 or second culture (Bowers, Fitts, Quirk, & Jung 2010). A novel lends itself to filling those background gaps. Characters, settings, and themes repeat themselves throughout one continuous story (Maxim, 2006). Reading an entire novel appears at first to be a daunting task, but is in fact a great advantage as students become familiar and comfortable with the recurring aspects. “Once ELLs build background knowledge about new concepts pick up the rhythm of an author’s style, or figure out the organizational pattern to a text, reading the rest of that text—and others like it—becomes easier” (Hadaway, 2009, p. 40).

All forms of children’s literature can serve as a means of filling background knowledge gaps, whether in content, social, academic, or cultural areas. Language learners are faced not only with a new home and language but also a new culture.
Extensive reading of children's literature can assist them in understanding the new cultural values that surround them.

While a teacher can explain and lecture on cultural norms and values, it is difficult to make culture concrete when students lack personal experience. Children's books provide authentic examples of culture and values, which can easily be brought into a classroom daily. Each book expresses an individual writer's perspectives on culture. The more books they read, the more ELLs will have to draw on when familiarizing themselves with this new culture (Fan, 2009).

When culture appears in the events or characters' reactions to events in a story, it is an ideal time to discuss and compare differences across cultures or even within one culture. Richard-Amato and Snow (2005) indicate that,

Through literature, students learn to explore possibilities and consider options for themselves and humankind. They come to find themselves, imagine others, value difference, and search for justice. They gain connectedness and seek vision; they become the literate thinkers we need to shape the decisions of tomorrow. (p. 399)

The teacher could facilitate this development by encouraging all students to compare events to their own background: are things similar or different? Do the students think that everyone would react that way? How would students themselves react if they were in this situation?

**Benefits for critical thinking**

When selecting curriculum, teachers need to keep in mind the ultimate goal of education. I would argue that we educate in order to prepare students to have
ownership of skills needed to be successful in life. Students will need to be able to recognize and solve problems for themselves. Literature can provide them with practice in critical thinking and problem solving. “Discussions about story conflict can also provide young readers with an opportunity to discover their own solutions, thus developing the skills and insights they will need when dealing with conflict in their own lives” (Ghosn, 2002, pg. 176-177).

According to Young (1980, p. ix), “students should be able to carry on types of mental activity more complicated than simple recall and restatement of ideas, facts, principles, etc.” This can be accomplished through the promotion of critical thinking (Young, 1980). Critical thinking skills are deemed necessary to gather, process, problematize, and use knowledge effectively or critically. As defined by Daniel and Gagnon (2001) “Critical thinking implies logical and creative thinking; it signifies logical and reflected thinking that enables one to decide what ought to be believed or done” (p. 419).

Critical thinking skills are important in all academic, professional, and social areas. Critical thinking skills involve not only the acquisition of knowledge or vocabulary but also the ability to apply knowledge and solve problems in life and academic circumstances. Literature can also be a tool in teaching the critical thinking skills students will need to be successful in their academic careers (Ghosn, 2002).

Using support activities during authentic literature readings, the teacher can model and scaffold these crucial skills of problem solving and critical thinking. Activities such as compare and contrast, identifying problems, predicting solutions,
and making as well as understanding inferences can assist the students in development of these skills (Daud & Husin, 2004; Ghosn, 2002).

Critical thinking skills gained while reading and discussing literature can also be applied to other academic areas; as critical thinking “is transferrable to any subject matter (Daniel & Gagnon, 2011, p.19). The teacher may model critical thinking in other academic areas, and draw the connection to the same skills used when reading literature. In this way the teacher can further scaffold and model the generalization of critical thinking skills.

Conclusion

The inclusion of all genres of children’s literature in ESL programs will assist ELLs’ transition to successful communication in a new language and culture. Authentic literature will assist students in vocabulary attainment and retention through motivating stories. It builds critical thinking skills as students face characters’ problems, solve problems with the characters, and reach solutions in their reading. The improved critical thinking, problem solving, and background knowledge gained from reading support and transfer to other curriculum areas.

Authentic children’s literature cannot replace the curriculum, but when selected and supported carefully, it has numerous advantages in second language acquisition. Literature can be a highly motivating means of support and reinforcement of academic content, building common background knowledge, providing a model of language usage and linguistic features, and improving problem
solving and critical thinking skills. The use of literature in ESL classrooms is a great asset in transitioning students into successful academic careers in their new language.
Reflection of Literature Artifact

I believe that if I never teach comprehension strategies in texts that are a bit above the students' comfort level, the development of literacy will be too slow to meet the intellectual needs of those students. I have always been in favor of using literature not only to increase motivation but also to teach reading comprehension techniques. After researching the use of authentic literature, I am especially interested in the use of authentic texts as a means of filling background holes across the academic and linguistic curriculum. I plan on increasing my own library with books that assist with the development of background knowledge and content familiarity across the first grade curriculum that I teach.
LANGUAGE ARTIFACT

Navigating Academic Language
While taking LING 6510, Linguistic Analysis class, I was very interested in knowing to what extent the simplification of language assisted with L2 development and at what point oversimplification might hinder L2 development. I was concerned as an ESL teacher with making input simple enough to understand and equally as concerned with not hindering students' academic language development by oversimplifying my language. In this paper, I discuss first the purposes of Motherese (the simplification of language for young children), and its counterpart ‘teacherese’. Second, I examine ELLs' need for L2 academic language development. Finally, I turn to written academic English and how its forms and structures can be taught to L2 learners to assist them in comprehension.
Navigating Academic Language

Introduction:

The number of ELL students in public schools is rapidly increasing (Hadaway, 2009; O'Hara & Pritchard, 2008; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). ELL students are at a greater risk than their native-speaking peers for not attaining grade-level academic achievement. Teachers of ELL students need to be aware of the additional challenge and how to best prepare these students for academic success. Navigating through academic English appears to be the greatest challenge students face in attaining grade-level achievement (Brown, 2007).

When teaching ELLs, it is important to recognize, first, the common educational pattern of using simplified language in the classrooms similar to motherese and, second, the importance of bridging the academic language gap so students are able to successfully navigate academic texts and understand the accompanying text structures. It is then critical that teachers of this population learn to balance simplifying language and, the teaching of academic language and its accompanying patterns, in order to maximize language development.

Teacher Talk

Motherese refers to the speech parents’ use with their young children. This speech is characterized by a higher than normal pitch, exaggerated inflections, slower pace, repeated phrases, and generally simpler construction than speech used
to communicate between adults (Fernald, 1985; Pinker, 1994). Pinker claims that motherese is "more directed to the here and now, and more grammatical" (p. 283).

It has been theorized that motherese fills certain developmental stages in infant language development. Parents' use of exaggerated tones and pitch may help maintain a child's interest, and other features such as slower pace may assist in the development of parsing speech (needed for speech comprehension) and the development of turn taking (Fernald, 1985). Statements about the here and now are prevalent in motherese; they are also simpler for a child to decipher. This type of speech is concrete because it refers to things the child can see and interact with directly. Concrete speech helps the child infer the meanings of unfamiliar vocabulary (Pinker, 1994).

When I became a English as a Second Language teacher in an elementary school, I found myself using many of the characteristics of motherese. My speech slowed, and my language became more directed toward what was happening in the present. I even found myself bringing in new classroom pets that I borrowed from friends and students' families, so that the class would have something to talk about that everyone could see and interact with directly. One day a cat climbed in our classroom window; a student jumped up and shut the poor animal in the window as it was trying to escape. That day, we talked and wrote about cats and windows. Just as it is easier for young children to infer meaning from language spoken about the here and now, it is easier for ELL students to understand the concrete language of
here and now or language that deals with shared experiences inside or outside of the classroom.

The way a teacher presents information to the students by scaffolding and offering information in manageable steps is referred to in the profession as 'teacher-talk'. In a study done by Ernst-Slavit and Mason it was found that in teacher-talk, everyday language was mainly used to teach content despite being aware of the need to teach discipline specific language and that technical or academic language is used very rarely (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, 2011). But core academic subjects require that concepts outside of the here and now are taught and this requires the use of more abstract language (Pinker, 1994). It is then, appropriate and necessary to scaffold instruction. Scaffolding is “the temporary assistance by which a teacher helps a learner know how to do something, so that the learner will later be able to complete a similar task alone” (Gibbons, 2002, p.10). I find myself drawing pictures, gesturing, and breaking directions into single-action steps. These techniques assist in making my language as concrete as possible.

I watched a short clip of an elementary art lesson to see some of the same teaching techniques and language patterns in another elementary teacher (Ordway, 2010). The teacher spoke clearly and slowly throughout the lesson. She used gesturing and repetition to emphasize what she was saying, and at other times, her gestures defined the language she was using. Students were not left to their oral language abilities alone to decipher meaning. During the majority of the lesson, the teacher modeled the actions of which she was speaking, and physically
demonstrated the new vocabulary that was introduced. The teacher broke instructions into smaller sequential steps to reduce the load on her students (Ordway, 2010).

I noted that the students' art assignment was divided into many smaller steps. In example 1, the teacher breaks up the directions of cutting out ovals and other shapes.

(1) "OK, Paper; fold it horizontally. Crease it. Cut on the fold. Now, you can start cutting the corners off and making ovals..."

She broke up the task of cutting out ovals into: get paper, fold horizontally, crease the paper, open the paper, cut down the fold, cut off the corners, and finally begin cutting ovals. She broke one action into five distinctly different and smaller actions.

This scaffolding assists students in accomplishing the task and clarifies possible misconceptions about the directions. The command to cut ovals was just one step in many of the even broader goal of creating a collage (in the style of Eric Carle).

Teachers often don't expose students to applicable technical vocabulary when they are teaching content. At one point in the lesson the teacher was teaching students to use a common watercolor technique called 'wet into wet'. The 'wet into wet' technique is when wet paint is used on wet paper or on another wet color to give a feathered blending effect. Example 2 shows how she described the process to her students.
(2) "I put my brush in the water get it good and wet" (performing action with brush and water)" and paint with the water" (modeling as she speaks) "and I would suggest actually that you stand up to paint. He painted back and forth like this." (Gesturing exaggerated painting back and forth with imaginary brush and then demonstrates with the actual paint and brush) "... He would use two colors, sometimes they would mix."

In this example, the teacher did not introduce the technical vocabulary of 'wet into wet'. Rather she taught them the process using a simplified vocabulary and many visual cues. The results were effective in that when showcasing the final products, I could tell that her students did learn to produce the desired watercolor techniques. The objective was not that the students would label the technique but that they would perform the technique. It would be unlikely that the students left the lesson knowing the name of that specific technique, although they did leave knowing how to use the 'wet into wet' technique.

Throughout the lesson the teacher frequently gestured to provide students with visual cues to the meaning of what she was saying. At one point she cupped her ear to let the students know they needed to speak louder for her to hear. Examples 3, 4, 5, and 6 include gestures occurring simultaneously with the teacher speaking to clarify meaning.

(3) "He did a drawing on tissue paper he laid it on top of the regular paper. And then used a mat knife to cut it out.

(4) "He painted back and forth like this"

(5) "I would like you to share right now things you remember from the movie that he did when he was making the art to go in the books."
(6) “Cut square into circles; rectangles into ovals; cut strips from rectangles. Cut rectangles and squares diagonally, to make triangles; and cut tall thin triangles.”

In example 3, the teacher created an imaginary paper in front of her with her hands while speaking, and then mimed the action of placing one paper on top of another and cutting the paper with a mat knife. The teacher’s actions provided visual cues not only to what the teacher was saying but also to the actions the students would be performing later. In example 4, she gestured with an imaginary paint brush the action of painting back and forth in a large exaggerated manner. The gesturing in examples 5 and 6 did not replicate actions but drew student’s attention to resources around the room. In example 5, she moved toward a bulletin board that displayed animals created using the painting techniques they were being asked to provide. In example 6 she pointed to a poster with examples of the shapes she was directing them to cut. Gesturing served to key students into new information such as the actions to be performed or to remind them of old information such as pointing to the shapes or gesturing toward bulletin boards with examples to refresh their memory, and to completely communicate ideas like cupping her ear to ask a child to speak up or pointing to a student to allow him to speak. These are techniques that most teachers use when instructing their young students.

In addition to gesturing, the teacher frequently modeled the actions she was expecting students to perform. Examples 7, 8, and 9 were all spoken while the teacher was modeling the actions.
(7) "I put my brush in the water, get it good and wet. Paint with the water."

(8) "I am going to do all this by folding and cutting, folding and cutting until the paper gets smaller and smaller. Ok, Paper (holds up paper) fold it, horizontally, (models) open it, (models) cut on the fold (models).

(9) "It's important to have all your pieces and arrange them before you glue it. Two dots. One. Two. (Models two dots of glue.) That is plenty of glue. Pick it up, (models) slide it under until you have it in the right spot (models), and push it down (models).

This teacher, like many teachers, used modeling as an additional visual cue to clarify the meaning of her oral instructions. Not only were the students hearing what was to be done, or getting partial visual cues through gesturing, students were seeing directly and exactly what the teacher meant by her instructions. In example eight the teacher used not only modeling but repetition to add emphasis "folding and cutting, folding and cutting". Now the listeners know from hearing and seeing that the way to achieve the desired result will be by folding and cutting.

Just like the teacher in this clip, teachers generally communicate information to their students orally in a manner as close to interpersonal language as possible. This makes the language more concrete and helps students gain access to content. Teachers' use of techniques, such as rephrasing, repetition, gesturing, sequencing, referential questioning, and providing content feedback, is communicative and helps to clarify meaning for ELL students (Cullen, 1998, 1979).

While the use of strategies associated with motherese or teacher-talk assists students in accessing abstract content, some suggest that teacher-talk could
negatively impact students’ language growth (Walsh, 2002). It is of additional concern that the heavy use of everyday language found in teacher talk is rarely used to assist in the understanding of academic language (Ernst-Slavit & Mason, 2011). This simplification of content-specific vocabulary and syntactic structure does address the goals of scaffolding language content and assisting ELL students in accessing content, but is not preparing students for academic language proficiency and independence within content-area reading. Richard, Amato, and Snow (2005), addressing the need for language development and content vocabulary development, state: “Students need opportunities to develop the English skills necessary for future use and for transfer to life skills” (p. 229).

**Academic Language**

Teaching is generally considered the effective presentation of content material that will allow students to comprehend and reproduce that academic content. Typically, teachers beyond the lower elementary grades do not view teaching reading as part of their job as content area teachers (Brown, 2007). Brown points out that, “When teachers teach content area subject matter, they are not usually concerned with teaching reading, since their task is content delivery” (Brown, 2007, p. 37). But ELL students need language support in all their content areas since the academic language is unique to academics and necessary for academic success (Brown, 2007).
The strain on ELL students' academic language proficiency is multifaceted and includes components such as: specialized and technical vocabulary; reading to learn; expository writing; unfamiliar text structures; and listening to learn from de-contextualized or content reduced language (Brown, 2007; Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). This content-reduced language is very different from the familiar motherese type of language, and even the simplified and highly contextualized language many teachers use when instructing students. The demands of academic reading increase as student's progress through their academic careers (Brown).

Content-reduced or de-contextualized language refers to language that is negotiated based solely on linguistic clues. In content-reduced language, non-linguistic cues such as facial expression, shared background knowledge, and models (all of which are central to social language comprehension) are reduced or not used. Many academic tasks require students to decipher meaning using exclusively linguistic clues. As a result the successful interpretation of meaning relies almost solely on the student's knowledge of English (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). According to Cummins (1999), Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is the ability to gain information based on language cues alone. Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency is generally thought of as de-contextualized as well as more abstract than Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS, Cummins, 1999) or social language. The language used in academic texts often requires CALP (Pinker 1994; Richard-Amato & Snow).
BICS is the language first acquired by ELL students and involves the language used in daily conversations (Brown, 2007). Teachers have a tendency to focus on BICS when determining language proficiency and language supports for ELL students (Chamot, & O'Malley, 1987; Richard-Amato & Snow, 2005). However, CALP can take as much as five to seven additional years to master after students have mastered BICS (Brown, 2007; Chamot & O'Malley). Unfortunately, ELL students’ language supports are typically removed before they master CALP, i.e., before they master the language skills they will need to successfully navigate through grade-level academic texts (Chamot & O'Malley; Richard-Amato & Snow).

VanPatten, Farmer, and Clardy (2009) proposed the teaching of processing strategies in second language teaching, a teaching approach they termed processing instruction. This approach to teaching is designed to enhance students’ current ability to comprehend and take meaning from input (Van Patten, Farmer, & Clardy). This however, requires an understanding of a desired outcome and the design of activities to direct students’ attention to appropriate language cues to help them decipher meaning (Van Patten, Farmer, & Clardy, 2009).

To understand the different linguistic features students would have to master to move from teacher-presented material such as the art lesson in the video to self-instruction through written academic materials and texts, I studied four elementary-content area texts in the subjects of social studies, science, math and, reading. I specifically looked for patterns that occurred in students' academic readings that they would need to understand in order to comprehend the text.
I found that just as a parent’s language provides cues to infants, and a teacher scaffolds and provides cues students use to infer meaning, these elementary level texts also provided cues to assist students in gaining information and attaching meaning to new vocabulary in more complex sentences. Academic cues could be found in a series of repeated patterns that were quite different from the familiar teacher-talk. I will focus on four main patterns: complex sentences, complex paragraphs, technical vocabulary, and the use of text features. If students are taught to recognize and understand how these four patterns can be utilized for comprehension, they will be more successful in their content area reading.

First, the academic texts used a complex sentence structure. This meant they often introduced the topic at the end of the sentence. In example 10, taken from a fourth-grade science book, we can see how the sentence is structured so that the main word occurs at the end of the sentence.

(10) “Another type of natural behavior that helps an animal survive is hibernation” (Scott Foresman Science 2008, p. 30).

In the text, the new technical vocabulary word “hibernation” occurred after the dependent clause, with two sub-units: “another type of natural behavior” and “helps an animal to survive.” Subject noun phrases containing a dependent clause are complex and more difficult for the brain to parse (Pinker, 1994). Pinker refers to this type of sentence as top heavy and states that a considerate writer should invert the phrases to lighten the burden on the listener (p. 201). Academic writing is full of complex sentence structures and top-heavy sentences. Example 10 could have been
written: “Hibernation, another type of natural behavior, helps animals to survive.”

Written this way, the subject/new technical vocabulary is introduced at the beginning of the sentence and lessens the burden on the reader.

Just as complex sentences whose subjects contain a dependent clause can be difficult for readers to understand, some paragraphs have a complex structure and are likewise more difficult to parse. Yet, complex paragraphs frequently occur in academic texts. A complex paragraph is a paragraph whose subject is preceded by one or more related sentences. Example 11 is taken from a sixth-grade social studies text.

(11) “Each year between April and October, winds blowing from the Indian Ocean bring warm air and heavy rains to south Asia. These winds, called monsoons, blow in the opposite direction in winter” (Harcourt Social Studies, 2007).

The topic “Monsoons” is not even mentioned in the opening sentence, yet it is the topic of not only the sentence in which it occurs, but also of the preceding sentence, and of the entire paragraph. In academic writing, topics can be pushed to the end of a series of dependent phrases as in example 11 and can also be pushed to the back of a series of dependent sentences as in example 12. This complex method of organizing sentences increases the load on short term memory and makes the task of comprehension greater (Pinker, 1994).

In example 12, we see another example of a complex paragraph from the same science book.
In places where winters are cold, many animals face a shortage of food for part of the year. Plants stop growing. Some insects and other invertebrates die. Others bury themselves until winter ends. Some animals deal with this food shortage by migrating. Migrating is traveling in search of food" (Scott Foresman Science, 2007).

The topic of this section in the social studies book “Migration” is not introduced until the fourth sentence, and it is preceded by several related subtopics. There is a lot of information for readers to keep track of before they know what topic to link the new information to. If the last sentence in example 12, “Migrating is traveling in search of food,” were moved to the beginning of the related sentences in the paragraph, it would be easier for the reader to sort the information.

It is not realistic to expect academic textbook writers to “considerately” simplify their writing to accommodate ELLs in their search for the topic. It is therefore critical that, along with content instruction, teachers train students to read academic writing, so that they have the strategies needed to be successful in their content classes (Brown, 2007). Learning to read complex sentences and paragraphs will assist students in knowing where to look for key words/subjects.

Academic texts introduce students to many new technical vocabulary words. As previously mentioned, technical vocabulary is one reason academic writing is so complex (Chamot & O'Malley, 1987). Technical vocabulary is not common in BICS, the language ELL students are most familiar with. Thus, academic writing is challenging due to unfamiliar text structure and unfamiliar words. Two key patterns used in academic texts are for defining technical vocabulary. All four texts examined frequently define newly introduced technical vocabulary in one of two ways: by
using synonyms, or by supplying a definition later in the sentence or in the
following sentence.

Example 13 was taken from a fourth-grade science book and shows the use
of synonyms within a paragraph. Example 14 was taken from and sixth-grade social
studies text and shows the use of synonyms within the sentence.

(13) "Some fruits and seeds get around by floating on water. Perhaps you've
seen one drifting along in a lake or river. Coconuts, which are the fruits of
one type of palm tree, can float between islands" (Scott Foresman Science
p.60).
(14) "This country consists of more than 1,000 coral islands, or atolls"
(Harcourt, p. 528).

This pattern of using synonyms within a paragraph or a sentence is an important text
feature. Teaching students to understand this pattern will assist them in developing
a larger academic vocabulary. It will help students link genre-specific or technical
words to more commonly used synonyms, which may already be a part of their
English vocabulary.

Readers can also make inferences by looking for a definition that will often
occur after a comma or in the following sentence in academic texts. Examples 15, 16
and 17 were taken from an elementary reading text designed to build students' reading fluency. Example 18 is from a fourth-grade science text.

(15) These ideas were spread by printing presses, which printed books much
faster than people could copy them by hand (Hiebert, 2004, p.61).

(16) If you put the thermometer into cold water, the liquid contracts, or gets
smaller (Hiebert, 2004, p. 28).

(17) Like comedians today, jesters in the middle ages told jokes and stories
(Hiebert, 2004 p. 59).
(18) Some animals deal with food shortage by migrating. Migration is traveling in search of food or a place to reproduce (Scott Foresman Science, 2008, p.30).

Students reading example 15 may not have ready access to the background knowledge necessary to understand what a printing press is. If they have been taught to keep reading, they find the definition directly after the comma. What did a printing press do? It printed books. In example 18, students encounter the new word “migrate” in the first sentence and find it later defined in the following sentence. The first sentence leaves them with the question: What is migrating? It is later answered: Traveling in search of food or a place to reproduce. Example 17 relates the technical word “jester” to modern-day comedians, and then defines the role of both in the same sentence, so it applies both techniques of a synonym and a definition in the same sentence. Understanding how to find and look for in-text definitions and how to infer the meaning of new vocabulary from the context of the text is much quicker than looking for a definition in a dictionary. It is also a necessary skill in reading academic texts.

Finally, students need to be taught to look for and use text features. Common text features in academic writing include: captions, illustrations, bold text, and headings. Illustrations and their related captions provide vital cues for creating inferences and determining meaning for otherwise abstract ideas.

A section in an elementary reading text (Hiebert, 2004) discusses festivals during the Middle Ages. Festivals and Middle Ages could both possibly be abstract
concepts, since they occurred outside of students' personal experiences/time and include the use of many technical and time-specific words that students may be unfamiliar with in the sense they are used in this text. However, the section contains an illustration of a festival, and the caption under the illustration reads: “These serfs are enjoying a festival on one of their few holidays” (Hiebert, 2004, p. 58).

Students who found themselves puzzled about festivals or the Middle Ages could look at the picture and read the caption to gain insights into otherwise unfamiliar concepts. They can see that festivals in the Middle Ages are not things that happen in the modern day; the people are dressed differently than we dress now, and their activities are different. Illustrations and their captions provide a visual along with a linguistic cue to deciphering texts.

In the fourth-grade math book, captions and illustrations are an important feature in defining key vocabulary as well as concepts in virtually every chapter. Examples nineteen and twenty are from the chapter Lines, Angles, and Shapes.

(19) (Illustration) A right angle is a square corner (Charles, 2009, p. 199).

(20) (Illustration) A straight angle forms a straight line (Charles, p. 199).

Students are not expected to rely solely on linguistic cues to determine the meaning of key words/concepts such as “right” or “straight angle”. The illustration and the corresponding caption provide both a visual and a linguistic cue to the technical vocabulary words “straight” and “right angle” as well as many other mathematical terms and concepts.
As previously mentioned, academic texts are full of top-heavy sentences and paragraphs. Yet as we will see, they do provide subject cues in the form of headings. Headings provide the topic of a section of text and precede the text body. These headings can help students make predictions about the type of information they should gain in the reading that follows. Headings prepare students to make connections between text and topic. For example, under the heading “People on the Move”, students are introduced to many technical terms including: migration, urbanization, metropolitan areas, suburbs, demographers, population, drought, famine, unemployment, and homeland (Harcourt, 2007). Students can infer based on the heading that all these words are going to relate to people moving. They then know that they should be looking to relate the corresponding sentences and paragraphs to the specified topic. A heading prepares students to look for why, how, and what, assisting them in sorting through the text to decipher the underlying purpose.

Example 21 is a paragraph from the sixth-grade science text and follows the heading Grafting.

(21) “Suppose an apple grower has some apple trees that grow good apples but have weak roots. The trees might die easily because the roots are not able to absorb water and nutrients from the soil. Other trees have strong roots but do not produce very good apples. The grower can take branches from the trees with good apples and join them to branches of the trees with strong roots. This process is called grafting. Grafting works only if the tubes that carry water, mineral nutrients, and food between the two plant parts match up. Then, new tubes can grow between the two parts” (Harcourt, 2007 p. 69).
The above is an example of a hard to parse, top-heavy paragraph. With the exception of the heading, the subject is not mentioned until the fifth sentence. However, the heading gives students a cue to deciphering the immediately following sentences. They know that the following sentences relate to the topic of grafting and can look to see if the sentences are explaining the why, what, or how of grafting. Why? “Some apple trees have strong roots but bad fruit and some have good fruit but weak roots.” How? “The grower takes branches from the trees with bad roots and joins them to the branches of the trees with strong roots.” What? “The process of joining branches and roots.”

Example 22, taken from the fourth-grade science text, was preceded by the heading Gravity and Landslides.

(22) “No part of Earth's surface is perfectly flat. The force of Earth's gravity pulls all objects from higher places down to lower places. It causes loose, weathered material to roll downhill. Bits of rock and soil may travel slowly downhill a little at a time. But sometimes they travel rapidly. Heavy rains or earthquakes may loosen material on a steep slope. Gravity then pulls the loosened material downward and into piles at the bottom. The rapid downhill movement of a large amount of rock and soil is a landslide...” (Scott Foresman, 2008, p. 268)

Again, the technical word landslide was not used until the seventh sentence although all the previous sentences described the process and how gravity contributes to the process. But if students had read the heading, they would already know that the sentences should relate gravity and landslides. This key understanding will help them make predictions about the importance of the text in how it relates to

Bold or highlighted texts can also cue students into critical vocabulary that relates to the subject of the text, or in math to the task to be performed. In example 23, under the heading of How Volcanoes Form from the fourth-grade science text, the word volcano occurred several times on the page however; the bolded word volcano marked the sentence on the page that answered the question posed in the heading.

(23) A volcano is a land form that can bring about a rapid change to Earth’s surface. Before a volcano forms, things happen deep underground. At 80 to 160 kilometers (50-100 miles) underground, very hot rock, called magma, is partially melted into liquid. Gas in the magma forces it upward. A volcano forms at a weak spot in the Earth’s crust where magma is forced upward and reaches the surface” (Scott Foresman, 2008, p. 270).

The bold word creates emphasis and lets readers know that they should pay attention to the information occurring around it. Bold words can also key readers into the definition of key vocabulary or important terms relating to the topic. In examples 24 and 25, from a fourth-grade math book, the highlighted words are defined during that sentence.

(24) A number in expanded form is written as the sum of the value of its digits: 5,000 + 200 + 60 +0.

(25) When writing a number in standard form, write only the digits: 5,260. (Charles, 2009, p. 4)
These two vocabulary words are necessary for the student to complete the math problems on the following pages. The next few pages include directions such as: “write each number in standard form” and, “write in expanded form” (Charles, 2009, p. 6). If the students do not know the meaning of those words, they cannot successfully complete the work. But they can flip back to the beginning of the chapter and quickly locate the words and definitions since they have been highlighted. Not only do highlighted/bold words key readers in to important concepts to follow, they can serve as a quick reference for material as readers to review or confirm perceived meaning later in their interactions with the text.

Conclusion:

ELL students benefit from certain features of teacher-talk found in motherese, and also from instructional strategies that build their academic language proficiency. Motherese and teacher-talk with their accompanying features, such as slower speech, repetition, simple structure, gesturing, modeling, scaffolding, and use of social vocabulary are effective tools for presenting and teaching new information and concepts to ELL students. Reducing the language barrier for ELL students and providing them with non-linguistic cues are necessary in assisting students to parse new information and new complex language. These techniques are, however, insufficient for preparing students for academic success and independence.
Academic English, with its complex expository text structure, technical vocabulary, and reduced visual cues, is very different from the language that most students encounter in their everyday education. Yet, students’ academic language proficiency is the key to their academic success and independence. ELL students are at increased risk when language supports are removed before they master the skills necessary to navigate the increasingly difficult language demands in their content area classes (Brown, 2007). Content area reading should be a part of every content area class and, the patterns students will encounter should be explicitly taught, so that they learn the academic skills necessary to navigate and comprehend grade-level texts.
As an ESL teacher, I strove to teach academic reading comprehension techniques and also found myself simplifying my speech and vocabulary to assist with comprehension. I would have loved more years to perfect the balance between these two seemingly contradictory language features. This paper helped me answer the question: How can a L2 teacher find the balance between simplified and academic English in order to best promote L2 development in an ESL setting? I concentrated on using simplified English to assist students in comprehension while still remaining focused on scaffolding and teaching the patterns found in academic English to allow students to make inferences and use techniques and patterns to discern meaning from unfamiliar academic texts.
CULTURE ARTIFACT

THE IMPORTANCE OF CLARIFICATION REQUESTS IN SLA
I was first interested in the topic of asking for clarification when I began teaching ESL. Many of my students were failing their academic subjects. After a series of observations of students in their content classes, I noted their reluctance to ask for assistance or clarification. I hypothesized that some of their academic struggles could be relieved if they were more comfortable with clarification requests. I began to teach what we called self-help skills in an attempt to get students to promote their own academic success by requesting assistance from their content teachers. I hoped that these skills would help them to become life-long advocates for their own academic and linguistic success.
The Importance Of Clarification Requests In SLA

Introduction

When I was a fulltime ESL teacher, I was disappointed when many of my students did well in my language classes but were still failing their regular education classes. To better understand the roots of this phenomenon, my fellow ESL teacher and I, along with our principal, took a day to observe our ESL students in their regular education classes. We noted that L1 students asked for clarification when they encountered a difficult task or when they misunderstood the teacher, whereas L2 students rarely commented or asked for clarification, despite the fact that there were many opportunities when it would have been appropriate and necessary for their comprehension. Students who were comfortable asking for clarification in ESL classes were uncomfortable asking in their academic courses; as a result their academic development was suffering.

We made a goal to teach our students to self-advocate in the regular education classes, specifically to ask for clarification, and to persist in clarification requests until they fully understood the directions/concepts. It was important to us that their language classes were preparing them for academic success outside of our classroom, and that included not only academic language but also self-help techniques such as asking for clarification.
What the Research Says

The trend of my students' unwillingness to ask for clarification requests was in keeping with the finding of Foster and Ohta who observed that, "signaling communication problems is uncommon" (2005, p. 418) among ELLs. The use of strategies such as negotiating for meaning and clarification requests does not appear to be popularly applied when miscommunication occurs (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994; Foster, 1998; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Ziglari, 2008). This lack of clarification requests in a classroom setting could be a result of the "face threatening nature" of making a clarification request. They may be hesitant to initiate a clarification request when it may draw attention to their lack of understanding and linguistic knowledge (Foster & Ohta, 2005). Ellis et al. agree that excessive use of clarification requests "may jeopardize communication from a social point of view" (p. 454). Furthermore, in a classroom setting where a teacher is directing the conversation, students may wait with the intent to clarify later or, when others are directing the conversation, may opt to abandon the idea (Ziglari, 2008).

I believe that these fears of jeopardizing social standing or peer perception may influence many of my ESL students who are taking classes with native-speaking peers. ESL students may already feel at a disadvantage in their content classes, but are hesitant to appear less competent openly. In one study, "obtaining completely comprehensible input appeared to be of lower priority than maintaining a supportive and friendly discourse" (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 402). L1 speakers often
wait to see if they can ascertain the meaning of previous utterances from the conversation that follows. This is one strategy a language learner may choose to attempt over asking clarification questions, in the hope that the next utterance will clear up the miscommunication (Foster, 1998).

While researching this topic I found that clarification requests and negotiating for meaning, and in a broader sense the role that interactions play in L2 learning, have been researched by others. All these terms refer to some linguistic or pragmatic feature that is used by either the speaker or the listener to clear up miscommunication or problem input. Problem utterances in language input result in communication breakdowns (Foster & Ohta, 2005). At the same time, these linguistic features, used in interaction to correct communication breakdowns, are deemed valuable in SLA (Foster & Ohta, 2005; McDonough & Mackey, 2000; Nassaji, 2010; Ziglari, 2008).

**Interaction in L2 Acquisition**

The literature supports that interaction is an important factor in L2 development and acquisition, because interaction supports comprehension (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994; Foster & Ohta, 2005; Ziglari, 2008). According to Foster and Ohta, “the most valuable way in which input is made comprehensible is through interactional adjustments” (p. 405). This may be because comprehensible input can be assured through negotiation while students are still being exposed to new language (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994; Foster, 1998).
Interaction allows students to have some control over the comprehensibility of the language input they receive, as opposed to being a non-participating listener (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994). While students may be hesitant to interact in the L2 when the conversation is teacher-directed, they might be more willing when they are directing the conversation to make interactional adjustments. Ziglari (2008) suggests that providing students with opportunities to express themselves can result in language acquisition because “the resulting negotiation is richer” (p. 451).

Interaction in the target language may be better facilitated in groups rather than whole-class lectures. Peers can negotiate meaning and co-construct meaning in a less threatening way when working together in small groups. It is commonly accepted that small groups can lower a student’s anxiety to speak in the TL while increasing the amount of time they have to practice the TL (Foster, 1998). Foster claims that the best model for group work, which ensures that all students participate, is pair work. In addition, Foster concedes that some comprehension benefit is accomplished in other small groupings when students simply listen to the dialogue, as others in the group negotiate meaning.

Negotiation of Meaning

The use of clarifying questions is one technique used in the negotiation of meaning (Long, 1996; Mackey, Kanganas & Oliver, 2011). However, there are many other pragmatic and linguistic features that are tools in the negotiation of meaning.
between two individuals (Long, 1996). As defined in Foster and Ohta, negotiating for meaning is "an activity that occurs when a listener signals to the speaker that the speaker’s message is not clear and the speaker and the listener work linguistically to resolve this impasse" (Foster & Ohta, 2005 p. 406). Negotiation of meaning is simply the tools L2 learners or their listeners apply to co-construct the meaning of language through interaction with peers or the speaker until the language is understood (Foster & Ohta, 2005; Long, 1996; Shrum & Glisan, 2010).

During an interaction, as opposed to a lecture or one-way communication, interaction between parties allows for negotiation of meaning. Negotiation for meaning may be necessary when what has been said is partially or fully misunderstood (Foster & Ohta, 2005). “It is increasingly accepted that conversational interaction in a second language plays an important facilitative role in second language learning” (Long, 1996; Mackey, Kanganas, & Oliver, 2011 p. 285).

My ESL students are frequently placed in academic settings where content as well as language is taught in L2. They routinely face communicative breakdowns, or situations where the meaning is at best unclear. It is important for them to have the pragmatic competence necessary to negotiate meaning with the speaker. “... in authentic situations... second/foreign language users may be confronted with situations that require an ability to persist in pursuing problematic talk, trying out new strategies when those already tried fail” (Soler & Martinez-Flor, 2008, p. 103). According to Lee and VanPatten (2003), “The act of communication in most settings involves the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning” (p. 51). Yet,
much of the research on negotiating for meaning was done from the view of the native-speaking peer or teacher negotiating and asking for clarification from the L2 student, and not the L2 speaker seeking clarification from the L1 speaker. The L1 speaker was clarifying the ideas the L2 student was trying to convey. Perhaps this is because in traditional teaching environments negotiating for meaning is so uncommon. According to Lee and VanPatten, there are potentially too many participants to make negotiating for meaning during teacher-fronted activities feasible, but small groups and pair work seemed to produce many more such negotiations (Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Much of the research found on the effectiveness of repair sequences on language learning was on correction of form, even though many suggest that it is lexical (vocabulary) and not grammatical knowledge that is most beneficial in L2 comprehension and comprehensibility (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994; Foster & Ohta, 2005; McDonough & Mackey, 2000). According to Foster and Ohta, “it is predominantly problems with lexis […] that cause communication failure” (p. 408). As an ESL as well as a content teacher, I am more interested in the correction of meanings, and the filling of vocabulary gaps which are critical for comprehension of the content curriculum, than I am in the correction of form.
Repairs vs. Clarification Requests

Repair is a term used to describe the L2 learner’s correction of incorrect utterances as a result of feedback (Nassaji, 2011). Repair sequences are preceded by trouble input or input that is misunderstood, incompletely understood or not understood at all. L1 speakers and teachers are not the only ones faced with problematic input. L2 students may face problematic input either when speaking with peers or with the teacher in L2. When L2 learners are confronted with trouble input they also must have pragmatic strategies to repair the miscommunication. Both the language learner and the teacher need to co-construct or negotiate meaning (Lee & VanPatten, 2003; Nakamura, 2008; Nassaji, 2010; Ziglari, 2008).

When co-participants encounter a conversational problem, they demonstrate through the shared management of their turn-taking that they can deal with it before proceeding. Repair helps us to see how participants orient to what has been said and project what to say next. In this way, talk is seen as being co-constructed for the purpose of establishing mutual understanding (Nakamura, 2008, p. 269).

The need for repair sequences in instruction or conversations with students does not necessarily mean that the input was inappropriate for the academic/linguistic level of the student (Foster & Ohta, 2005). In fact, Vygotsky’s claims regarding the Zone of Proximal Development (the zone in which instruction is most appropriate for student growth) in its very essence require that meaning be co-constructed or scaffolded by another person. Information that is presented in learners’ ZPD requires assistance for comprehension/performance before the student will be able to comprehend/perform on his own (Foster & Ohta, 2005;
The main idea is that “what the learner can be assisted in doing is soon to be something they can do without help” (Foster & Ohta, 2005, p. 414).

**Conclusions:**

The conclusions I have drawn from the above research and how they may apply to me as an ESL teacher are as follows: First, instances of students using clarification requests are uncommon in L2 populations and, as Foster (1998) states, “if we think this is an undesirable state of affairs and would prefer our students to pursue communication breakdowns until they are resolved, it is probably necessary to show them how to do this, and why” (p. 19). As the research demonstrates, negotiation for meaning can assist in the development of the L2 (Ellis, Tanaka & Yamazaki, 1994; Long 1996; McDonough & Mackey, 2000). I should be teaching my students the how and why of negotiating for meaning.

Second, the making of clarification requests is just one of several techniques used by the L2 learners and teacher alike that can assist in the comprehension of problem utterances. Negotiating for meaning incorporates several different sub-skills, including comprehension and confirmation checks as well as clarification requests or questions (Ellis, Tanaka, & Yamazaki, 1994; Foster, 1998; Long, 1996; McDonough & Mackey, 2000).

And third, just because an utterance cannot be understood in isolation, does not mean that it is not appropriate for the learner. In fact, appropriate input that
leads to acquisition is input that requires the assistance of another person (Foster & Ohta, 2005; Shrum & Glisan, 2010; Ziglardi, 2008). Therefore, it is important in language development that there is room for scaffolding by peers or by the teacher. The environment of the classroom needs to be such that the students are comfortable applying negotiation of meaning strategies and provided with opportunities not only to comprehend input but to practice output. This means planning group and pair work into my lessons, so students have the opportunity to practice the negotiating for meaning techniques that have been taught.

In light of these conclusions from the research literature, as well as my experiences as an ESL and a content teacher, I am left with significant questions in regards to the negotiation of meaning and the use of clarifying questions. The questions I would pose for further research are as follows:

**Research Topics**

As a teacher of ESL students I am tasked with preparing my students for their academic careers in L2. Through the research of this and other papers I have a better understanding of the pragmatic needs of teachers and students alike in assisting the development and comprehension of L2. However, I believe that there are several questions that need to be further researched in the area of asking clarifying questions, and how to teach these skills, and how and if the use of them affects not only the development of L2 but specifically the academic competence and proficiency in L2. The research points I wish to pursue are as follows.
1. I would like to conduct more research specifically on the L2 speakers’ use of clarifying questioning to negotiate meaning with the native language speakers and teachers. Specifically I wish to investigate whether L2 learners who applied this pragmatic technique outperformed L2 learners who didn’t use clarifying questioning in L2 classrooms in their linguistic and content competence.

2. Further study on how the use of clarifying questioning affects ESL students’ comprehension of subject matter in content classrooms is needed. I would like to study the effective methods for teaching the skill of asking clarifying questions in the ESL classroom. Additionally, I would like to track the students to see if the questioning skills taught in the ESL setting are transferred to their general education classes. And finally, if skills taught are generalized does it have a positive impact on student comprehension of subject matter in L2 as measured on content tests or tasks?

3. Thirdly, I would like to study how these pragmatic skills (questioning for clarification, and negotiating for meaning) are best taught to L2 learners in different settings, i.e., ESL classrooms versus L2 content area classrooms. How would the teaching of these techniques be taught in a ESL classroom and supported in a content area classroom? If the skills are not taught in the language classroom, how would they best be taught and supported in the content area class?

4. The majority of the research done on clarification requests/ negotiating for meaning and its accompanying skills has been done on college or adult ESL populations. I would like to research how the current research findings and data
relate to younger learners of English. I wish to determine to what extent the current findings apply to younger populations, and what adjustments need to be made for specific age groups.

In Closing

In closing, as ESL students are in a unique position requiring them to gain all content area instruction in L2 even before reaching proficiency in L2, it is important for them to have the strategies needed to access the curriculum. ESL students cannot afford to fall behind in their content and academic development while they are waiting to gain academic proficiency in L2. But as stated by Lee and VanPatten (2003) “in many second language contexts, communication breakdowns are likely” (p. 51). I believe that having the skills needed to negotiate for meaning and asking for clarification are critical skills for ESL students to possess so they can be utilized when communication breakdowns do occur. Applying skills such as negotiating for meaning or asking clarification questions will assist them in advocating for their own educational needs. It will serve to remind and assist the teacher to appropriately scaffold the instruction until mutual understanding is reached (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2003).

If research can show that the teaching of these skills does lead to generalization and increased academic proficiency, it would be important to implement the teaching of these skills in L2 classrooms and content area classrooms. Further research on age appropriate instruction would help in designing a
progressive curriculum that could span K-16 education. I believe it is important for ESL students to have the pragmatic skills necessary to fully access their curriculum in our school systems and in life. If it was better understood how to prepare ESL populations to be successful negotiators of meaning, I believe that students would have better success in their regular education classes, and as a result have better access to academic curriculum and the potential to be more successful in higher level classes despite their limited English proficiency or vocabulary gaps.
Reflection on Culture Artifact

The research literature supports my observation that L2 learners are unlikely to ask for clarification or signal their misunderstanding; it also supports my hypothesis that these pragmatic skills are beneficial to L2 development. After reading the research on this topic, I am recommitted to directly teaching students how to make clarification requests and negotiate for meaning. I think that these skills could have a positive impact on not only L2 development but also the academic development of ELLs.
RESEARCH PROPOSAL

THE IMPACT OF AUDIO-BOOK READ ALONG, AS A HOME COMPONENT, ON L2 LITERACY
Introduction to Research Proposal

As an elementary school teacher, I am keenly interested in the literacy development of L2 students. I have encountered many reading programs intended for ELLs, most of which I find to be ineffective. While the programs may have had some benefit, the test results as well as my informal observations suggested that the comprehension and literacy of students seemed to be compromised by the sole use of these programs.

The following paper was a research proposal I wrote for LING 6010 Language Research in L2 Learning. Books on tape were something I had used briefly as a home component for my ESL classes. They seemed to be effective in motivating students to read more age and grade-appropriate books. The students loved checking out the books and reading them at home. I became curious as to how beneficial something as simple as a book on tape was for language development.
Abstract:

Research suggests that the effective use of books on tape can assist with language development (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000; Skouge, Rao & Boisvert, 2007). This study tests the hypothesis by contrasting the literacy performance of two groups of third grade ELL (English language learner) students. All students will select a trade book daily (designed and marketed for entertainment) to read at home; group one will receive just the book; group two will also receive its accompanying audio version on CD. The groups will be compared on gains in reading fluency, reading comprehension, as well as the level of difficulty of self-selected books. Comparisons in all areas of study will be based on pre and post-tests, as well as progress monitoring tests at given intervals across an academic year.

Literature Review:

Researchers have suggested that the effective use of books on tape can assist with language development (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000; Skouge, Rao, & Boisvert, 2007). Will there be similar improvement in the literacy development of an ELL population? The hypothesis tested in the proposed study is that there is a positive correlation between using books on tape with reading homework, and the literacy development of L2 learners.

This study demonstrates the relationship between books on tape (audio books) and the development of L2 literacy when used in combination with the
regular homework-reading program. “English-Language Learners are one of the largest groups of students who struggle with literacy in general and vocabulary and comprehension in particular” (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004, p. 720). The importance of gaining a deeper understanding of how to improve literacy skills among this population is generally recognized (Hickman, Pollard-Durodola & Vaughn, 2004; Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000; Skouge, Rao & Boisvert, 2007; Williams & Williams, 2000).

English language learners tend to have limited access to printed books in any language (Goldsmith, 2002; Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000; Lugo-Neris, Jackson & Goldstein, 2010). “Many people in the United States, including many immigrants for whom English is a second language, lack basic literacy skills. For these groups books, and other print materials are largely inaccessible” (Skouge, Rao & Boisvert, 2007, p. 5). A way to address the problem of limited print materials at home is to assign books to be read at home as homework. It has been proposed that using books on tape is an effective way of making English print accessible not only to the students, but to the whole family, so that everyone in the home is able to hear and enjoy the stories together while the illustrations can help convey the meaning and language of the text (Skouge, Rao, & Boisvert, 2007). According to Koskinen et al. (2000) “storybook illustrations typically convey as much, or more, meaning than the text” (p. 9).

Researchers have demonstrated several benefits of using books on tape with ELLs who struggle with literacy. Books on tape are highly motivating to the students
themselves. Books on tape allow students to focus on comprehension and meaning while reading what their more proficient peers are reading. In addition, ELLs who listen to books on tape grow “in their ability to read books of increasing difficulty both fluently and accurately when given the opportunity to reread books with audiotapes at home” (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000, p. 24).

Reading along with a book on tape can be beneficial for ELL students for many reasons. Listening to the performances of the readers of text can promote not only interest in the material but also comprehension. While modeling correct phrasing and expression, a book on tape provides many auditory cues to meaning (Casbergue & Harris, 1996). Listening to many books on tape assists students in internalizing storyline organization, as well as the written structures of English, which can be very different from the spoken structures of language. This understanding of structure is “critical to comprehension” (Casbergue & Harris, 1996, p. 49). When listening to books as opposed to strictly reading them, they are exposed to these structural patterns in a natural way as the readers emphasize certain phrases helping students cue into the difference between dialogue and formal written structure.

Many researchers have noted the increased motivation for ELLs to read when they have access to books on tape (Goldsmith, 2002; Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Phillips & Creamer, 2000; Patten & Craig, 2007). In fact, increased motivation to read has been stated as one of the major benefits of using audio books with ELL students. The motivation can come from several contributing factors. One is that books on
tape assist students in reading books with more advanced vocabulary and syntax than they would be comfortable reading alone (Goldsmith, 2002). Students want to read what their peers are reading, and books on tape assists them in successfully reading the favorite books of their more advanced peers. The use of new technology to promote reading activities can be motivating as well, so assigning homework on the latest technology such as iPods may be considered “cool” (Patten & Craig, 2007), further motivating the student to persist in the task.

As a previous teacher of ESL in public elementary school, I noted that when my students selected books with accompanying audio, they chose more advanced books than when they selected a book without audio. As a result of my experience working with L2 learners, as well as studying the research on the implementation of books on tape into the educational program, I am very interested in furthering the research done in this specific area, as well as other techniques that may be applied when attempting to fill the literacy gap that many ELL students face. The proposed study would look at one technique geared at improving literacy to determine if in fact it does help fill the literacy gap of these students.

Questions:
The main purpose of this study is to track growth of two groups of third-grade ESL students to gain understanding about the impact of books on tape with the development of three main literacy skills: fluency, comprehension, and choice. The research questions are as follows:
1. Is there a difference in students’ reading fluency scores between the control group (without audio books) and the treatment group (with daily audio books)?

2. Is there a difference between treatment and control groups in students’ reading comprehension when tested on grade-level texts?

3. Do students in the treatment (audio book) self-select books with a higher lexile-reading level (a common method of determining the difficulty level of books) than students in the control group?

Methods:

This study will be conducted using two elementary schools with ESL programs; a school will be randomly assigned to participate in either the control or the treatment group. Although only third graders will participate in the study, reading materials for check out will need to be provided and lexiled for multiple reading abilities and grade levels. Reading materials for the treatment group will be accompanied by audio versions as well as CD players for check out if necessary.

In both programs students will be required to check out a book to take home at least four nights a week as a part of ESL class requirements. Teachers will be instructed on how to implement the self-selected reading program, including how to distribute and collect books.

Both groups will be given a reading fluency and comprehension test before the implementation of the home reading program to provide baseline data on the
two populations, as well as to begin a growth model from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

In order to track the difficulty of books students choose to read themselves, the students will be trained to use a classroom computer to scan in books they are returning at which point they will also be asked to select whether they had read the book or how many times they read the book they were returning and to check whether they liked the book. Students will not be penalized in any way for not reading books they had checked out.

Students' reading fluency will be monitored at regular intervals using their school's standard grade-appropriate reading-fluency assessment. Students will also be regularly monitored on reading comprehension using a standardized reading comprehension exam on grade-appropriate texts.

The scores of the treatment and the control group will be compared to see if there is a significant difference in performance between the two groups of third-grade ESL students. The main purpose of this study is to see if it is worthwhile to buy the extra supplies needed for a book on tape library in ESL classrooms. It would be worthwhile only if such a library assists ESL students in the development of reading fluency/comprehension skills.
Reflection on Research Proposal

I recognize that nothing as simple as having L2 students check out books on tape will fix L2 literacy problems. After all, if hearing the language is adequate for literacy development, then the reading and language input that naturally occurs during the academic school day would be sufficient. Though I am no longer an ESL teacher, I would be interested in seeing the results of this proposed study. If the proposed treatment proved to be an effective resource for L2 literacy development, it would be an easy thing to implement in addition to regular literacy instruction.
ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION OF TEACHING VIDEO
Teaching Video Analysis and Reflection

Background/justification:

These video-recorded lessons were taught to a class of 23 first grade students. Three of the students had a L2 influence, meaning that they or members of their immediate family spoke a language other than English in the home. One of those three had scored Limited English Proficient on the state Language Proficiency exam.

This series of lessons was on persuasive writing. This was the first exposure student had to writing persuasive pieces. Three fifteen-minute lessons were conducted over three days. This allowed me to keep students’ interest as well as review new material so that students would be comfortable with it before they had to use it. It also allowed me to assess knowledge and adapt my presentation across the three days.

Introduction:

The lesson began with a read-aloud from a picture book (Bread and Jam for Francis by Russell Haban). The students sat on a rug in order to see the illustrations. Starting with an illustrated children’s book was a motivating way in which to introduce a new concept. It also allowed the students to start with a similar background knowledge base. Linking the new knowledge to a shared reading
experience allowed all students to participate and come up with appropriate examples as I continued with the lesson.

**Presentation:**

The academic vocabulary I wanted students to gain from this lesson were the words persuade and persuasive. I introduced these words by writing them on the board. The class then pronounced the words while clapping the syllables so that they could accurately pronounce them. I introduced their meanings by linking them to the ways the little girl persuaded her family in the book. Using examples of persuasive speech from the book improved students’ ability to give these words concrete meaning and connect them not only to the book, but also with a familiar scenario in their own lives, i.e., persuading their parents and friends to let them have their favorite food and not have foods that they don’t like. I think that the book as well as the accompanying lesson was effective at accessing student background knowledge as well as piquing their interest.

I then introduced the three parts that students would need in their persuasive writing. The next portion of the lesson was taught the second day. I listed on the board the foods the class thought they could persuade someone else to try. The list included fish stew, Japanese food, shrimp, and spaghetti. This allowed students the opportunity to share something about themselves with the class, which they enjoy. I then modeled writing a persuasive piece on trying ice cream, taking reasons and examples from the class. I then had the students write their own
persuasive piece on the food of their choice. Students were then invited to read their writing to the class if they chose.

The third day, before the students arrived, I wrote a first grade appropriate persuasive essay on the book we had recently read, Bread and Jam for Francis, and put it on the board. Before school a couple of students wrote under the essay Miss Sharp is trying to persuasive us. So it was clear to me that at least some of the students were able to generalize their new knowledge about persuasive writing even when seeing it written on a different topic. This was exciting to me because students’ ability to recognize and generalize material is critical for their academic success.

I read the note aloud to the class and asked if someone could think of a word that would sound better in that sentence than persuasive. Hearing it out loud they were all able to recognize that persuade was a better word for the sentence.

I had the students read my essay and identify the components of persuasive writing. We then made a list of some of the class’s favorite books, listing reasons they were good to read. The students were then paired to discuss a book they had chosen to write about and give their partner three reasons they should read it. This accomplished two things. It gave students a chance to speak to each other, as well as allowed for another peer model of the upcoming task. The students then wrote a second persuasive piece on a favorite book.
Assessment:

During these three lessons I gave three main assessments: one oral recall of what was needed in a persuasive writing piece, and two writing samples of student persuasive pieces. The oral assessment had very specific answers and let me assess quickly whether students understood what was being taught and expected of them in their writing. The two writing assessments let me assess whether students could apply this knowledge for a communicative purpose. They also allowed for individual student creativity as they chose the topic of their paper, which made the task motivating and interesting and told me more about the student than a formative assessment with one right answer. The writing assessment allowed them to demonstrate their critical thinking as well as their academic writing skills.

As I looked at students' writing after the first day, I noticed that a few students used my exact reasons in their own writing. One of special note was the ESL student who wrote to persuade people to eat pizza. His writing (with spelling corrections) read: “You should try pizza. It is Yummy. Pizza is sweet.” Yummy and sweet were two words discussed when doing the shared writing on ice cream.

Now this student does know the meaning of the word sweet, but it is apparent that something about the task was challenging enough that he could not generate his own ideas. I believe that teaching schedules and curriculum need to be flexible enough that I am able to adjust based upon students' needs. So, even though I was not necessarily planning on continuing persuasive writing that week, I decided to reteach the next day to improve students' understanding of the subject.
After the second day’s lesson the same ESL student wrote: “You should try Ninja books. Ninjas can do tricks. They can make you laugh. Ninjas are cool and they can be silly. It is a cool book. You should read it. And do flips.” This was an enormous improvement from his first attempt at persuasive writing. He wrote more, chose appropriate related reasons, and had a conclusion with an additional thought at the end.

Possible Improvements:

If I were to reteach this lesson on persuasive writing I would like to find a book that better illustrates persuasive writing. The book that was used worked for generating ideas on persuasive writing, but I would also like a book that more specifically models persuasive writing on a first grade appropriate level.

In order to more effectively access background knowledge I would have taken the time to have students share a time they were persuaded to try a new food as well as share an example of my own. I think that additional personal examples would have better prepared them for the task of writing a persuasive piece. I could also find a short video clip modeling persuasive speech.

In order to better emphasize writing’s communicative purpose, I think that it would have been great to partner students together and instead of having them only look for the three components of persuasive writing, have them decide if the writing was successful and could persuade them to try this new food.
To make this portion of the lesson more effective I could have taken a few minutes to talk about choosing foods that were favorites in their homes, making the connection to their homes and the foods that different families enjoy. I could have also brought something unusual my family enjoys that may not look that appetizing and after the persuasive writing give students an opportunity to try it at recess if they wanted to. And I may have emphasized to students that they might want to choose a food that other people may not have tried but that they think they should.

Although the use of favorite foods as well as favorite books was motivating and interesting to the students, I mainly used the board for writing and oral directions to present the material. If I had some more visuals or activities students could perform, that would assist students in retention and interest in the lesson.
ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY
Introduction to Annotated Bibliography

The following is an annotated bibliography of books and articles that I read during my coursework in the MSLT program. Many of the articles and books were influential in my artifacts, my personal teaching philosophy, and my language teaching in practice. They are organized in four main themes: Literacy, Academic Language, Programs and Methods, and Culture/Language.

**Summary:** This article stresses the importance of supporting students’ transition from pleasure reading to academic reading. It suggests using a technique termed Narrow Reading to accomplish that goal. Narrow Reading refers to reading in one area or theme until ready to read across broad topics and areas. This means that students would read many different writings about one narrow topic before moving to more complex academic texts on the same, but more inclusive topic. It also recommends using children's books to build background knowledge in areas that will be necessary in later academic reading.

**Reflection:** The author made a strong case for using literature in ESL classrooms as a means of teaching academic reading skills to ESL students. The idea of using narrow reading to build students’ background knowledge is interesting to me. I believe it would help transition students into content area reading. After Narrow Reading they would already be familiar with concepts and some terms when presented with content material in the more complex expository style found in most textbooks.

**Summary:** This article proposes the use of literature to bridge the gap between students' general verbal skills and their content area language skills. The authors specifically focus on using literature as a way of boosting comprehension in science content. They posit that using a thematic approach to curriculum assists students' attainment of desired content. The authors encourage L2 teacher to make selections of poetry, narratives, and other forms of literature. By providing students with literary texts teachers are building their background in the content area as well as providing them with material that has the potential of strengthening their schemas.

**Reflection:** This article embraces using fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and other forms of literature while teaching academic content. I liked the idea of themes and providing students with different situations in which to link the desired content. The more background students have in the content area, the more developed their schemas. The more material students can link the difficult science content, the more likely they will be to create and retain meaning. I also think it would be great to have students create their own literature around academic topics. If the teacher has been providing them with many literary works around the theme, these works can serve as models for the type of work the students will be producing.

**Summary:** This book was a required reading for one of my TEAL (teacher education and leadership) classes. The authors focus on research-based, effective methods of literacy instruction for all students. They emphasize that literature-based skills should be taught for communicative purposes. Decoding, they argue, has no value if students are not taught to decipher meaning from the words they are saying. They claim that the entire point of literacy instruction is to enable students to have access to academic content. So it follows that literacy instruction and content area should be taught simultaneously. The teaching of reading skills simultaneously with content would support one main goal of reading instruction, reading to learn.

The book covers how to teach in different writing genres including expository texts and visual or media based texts. It also addresses vocabulary needed for effective content literacy. Lastly, it discusses adaption to make the content accessible to all learners and gives specific strategies to reach ESL students and learners performing below grade level.

**Reflection:** As a grade school teacher I agree that literacy and content should not be separated, because it is critical that students gain content area literacy skills from the very beginning of their education. This will prepare them for middle school, high school, and higher education. I recently attended a state curriculum directors
meeting where student writing was a topic of concern. Our students perform
below where they should be in their writing abilities, which results in them
graduating without the writing skills they need in higher education. It is believed
that these literacy problems begin in the elementary grades. We have been teaching
literacy skills separate from content areas. As a result, when students are required to
read, decipher, and write in unfamiliar genres they are unprepared to do so
successfully. The state of Utah has adopted a new Language Arts Core that will mean
students are reading and writing on a higher level beginning in kindergarten classes.

This text has numerous connections with teaching English as a second
language. If we attempt to teach English separate from the general core, students
will struggle to develop the language skills necessary to access content on higher
academic levels.


Improving vocabulary and comprehension for English language learners.

*Reading Teacher, 57*(8), 720-730.

**Summary:** The authors explain why English as a L2 learners struggle with literacy.
They claim that the holes in literacy are affected by many factors including
educational background in first or second language as well as socioeconomic status.
They present the use of storybook reading to improve the literacy of L2 learners.
Using storybook reading can improve literacy among L2 learners in many ways,
including vocabulary gains, the building of cultural understanding, and the provision of language models.

**Reflection:** I have noticed in my ESL classes that each student comes with different levels of academic schooling in their first language. In some groups it seems their main commonality is the fact that they do not speak the L2 fluently. But content understanding varies greatly. I like using storybook reading to increase vocabulary and build background knowledge on varied subjects. Storybook reading can be enjoyable and instructional for varied language proficiency levels. Beginning students can work on labeling skills as students look at and identify objects in the pictures, while more advanced students can analyze text to search for clues and formulate predictions.

In a classroom teachers are limited as to the actual places they can take their students. They cannot for example take them to a kitchen to explain to them the names of objects in a kitchen or what a kitchen is used for. But they can read about many kitchens and ask students to compare kitchens in books to their own (e.g., “Do you have a fridge in your kitchen? How about an alligator?”). Books can serve as great introductions to oral language practice as well as listening activities.

**Summary:** This journal article reports on the effectiveness of different pedagogic modifications of authentic texts for L2 students. The most common modification is the simplification of texts, however, this results in the leaving out of many important linguistic features such as idiomatic expressions. The researchers decided to study 'elaborative' modifications of authentic literature their success in assisting with the assess-ability of authentic literature by L2 students without the side effects of text simplification.

'Elaborative' modifications are clarifying extensions of the text, and the use of synonyms, as opposed to deletions or simplifications. They compared groups being taught from elaborately modified authentic texts and groups with unmodified texts. They found that groups reading elaborately modified versions had greater vocabulary recognition after reading.

**Reflection:** Like many studies the results were not conclusive. The author as needing further research pointed out several variables. However, I find the idea of elaborately modifying text appealing. When teachers use text talk and similar strategies they are essentially doing that in oral form. One advantage I see in text talk is that students
become familiarized with both the original word as well as the synonym, and as a teacher I may provide several synonyms either out of need or as a means of introducing or providing links to even more vocabulary. In an elaborately modified text, difficult words are replaced with a synonym. They are most likely already familiar with. It is for this reason I would not choose to read them in a class or supported group setting. But if teachers could provide for their students elaborately modified texts to read on their own I believe that they would be very useful in building both vocabulary and confidence in reading as the students would be reading age-appropriate content and titles.


**Summary:** This author claims that even students who are exposed to expository texts are not instructed on how to comprehend them. She points out that in the primary grades the focus is away from reading to learn but instead on gaining decoding skills. The author suggests three reasons primary grade teachers should teach content area literacy.

The first is the need for early exposure to expository texts. She argues that students with experience in expository texts in early grades demonstrated improved reading and writing skills in later grades. The second reason is simply that
informational texts help motivate children to read and learn. That knowledge gained through the reading of non-fiction expository texts can be just as motivating as reading stories through narrative texts. In addition, non-fiction texts prepare students for future success in their reading careers.

The third reason is that informational texts increase new knowledge domains. The author recommends that teachers integrate reading instruction with content areas. By doing this students learn to gain knowledge from their assigned reading, while learning the skills necessary for reading.

Reflection: As an English as a Second Language teacher I agree that it is critical that students become familiar with informational texts and the strategies they need to gain understanding from them. When students are learning their second language while also receiving content area instruction in that language, it is critical that they gain the vocabulary and reasoning skills necessary to comprehend readings in the content areas.

Learning to read and reading to learn can be taught at the same time. I believe the author when she says that this will prevent achievement drops in later grades. I think that the sooner students are taught strategies for comprehending content specific texts the more successful they will be in later grades when reading to learn is critical to their academic success.


**Summary:** With the growing number of ELL students in the American public school system, teachers are concerned with the academic development of this population of students. The author makes the argument that reading is one of the most important skills in a student's academic career and necessary for academic achievement. However, reading is often not given the appropriate consideration despite its importance. Reading is often thought of in terms of literature, and is taught with literature and language arts in mind. But reading is also critical in all other content areas such as math, science, and social studies. Students are not always taught how to read the language of science or social studies, which tends to use expository style and is much more difficult for students to read and understand.

The author proposes four strategies to help ESL students in content area texts: using content maps, combining content teaching and reading instruction, reading simplified texts, and providing guiding questions. If teachers provide reading instruction along with their content teaching they help students not only gain content, but also make gains in academic English.
Reflection: Reading does seem to be generally taught only in the literature/language arts genre. Texts in the content areas such as science and math are difficult even for native-speaking peers. Content or academic texts are especially difficult for second language learners, many of whom have never been exposed to the technical vocabulary or the more difficult syntax of academic writing.

There is an increasingly strong push from ELL advocate groups to teach academic language so that students can have better access to academic content. As a teacher it is easy to teach the content and consider the job is done. Unless, the skills needed to decipher content area texts have been taught in addition to the content, the students are not sufficiently prepared for success in that discipline.

It is critical that we assist students in the development of not only technical vocabulary but of academic texts structures, so that they have the tools needed to build and gain knowledge not only from the teacher but also directly from academic texts.


Summary: These authors emphasize that all learners, but specifically English as a second language learners need to develop CALP (cognitive academic language proficiency) as well as BICS (Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills) in order to be
successful in their school and in life. It is especially important for students whose
academic content and schooling will occur only in their second language to develop
CALP. And that CALP must be taught from their first experiences in schooling in their
second language.

Despite how critical it is for these students to gain CALP, BICS is what teachers
of second language students have traditionally taught. The teaching of CALP is
foreign to most elementary teachers. This study acknowledges the importance of
teaching CALP skills for ESL students’ success. Teachers were surveyed after trainings
to determine which of the taught strategies they used and how frequently, and
which strategies were deemed the most useful and productive by teachers.

Some of the strategies that were covered in the study were: the building of
background knowledge, authentic contextualized instruction, linking to native
language, comprehensible input and, explicit instruction of linguistic features in
texts.

Reflection: It is troubling that, as critical as CALP is for ESL student success, it is so
misunderstood by elementary teachers. But I can absolutely relate, as an ESL teacher
I felt and in many senses still feel completely unprepared to teach CALP skills to
students. I think that the teaching of these skills is still a mystery to many teachers
who believe CALP should magically come as BICS develops.

CALP requires students to navigate through the many different genres and
vocabulary and text structures that students need to succeed in school. At the same
time, I think that it is important to note that Cognitive Academic Language skills are difficult for not only ESL students, but also for native-speaking students and possibly for their teachers. However, if the teacher is uncomfortable navigating through academic language it becomes increasingly difficult to teach students, especially ESL students, to navigate those texts.

The authors point out that CALP is critical to ESL students’ academic success and that it will not develop as naturally as BICS and must be taught explicitly. With this being the case, it is imperative that teachers do become familiar with and proficient in teaching CALP skills.


Summary: The author’s premise is that language skills and math vocabulary are increasingly important for student success in mathematics. With increased emphasis of high stakes testing, which involves difficult word problems and the use of mathematical language, it is important that instruction in math vocabulary become a part of the curriculum, especially in grade school.

The authors’ discuss two types of vocabulary words that cause confusion in math. They are technical words and sub-technical words. Technical words have specific technical mathematical definitions that must be memorized. Sub-technical words are words whose common meaning students are already familiar with. In
settings but whose mathematical meanings are often quite different and therefore must be relearned.

Reflection: In my experience in teaching both English as a Second Language and math intervention I have frequently seen students struggle with math language. I agree that educators need to specifically teach math vocabulary. This article, although not primarily addressing English Language Learners’ performance in math, is very applicable to that population. English Language Learners often struggle in content area courses specifically math as a result of their lack of content specific language. The concept of sub-technical vocabulary is especially important when working with English as second language students. We need to be aware that multi-meaning words can cause additional confusion and their meanings need to be specifically taught in their related settings. This article provides support for teaching language not as a separate academic subject but as a means of accessing content in content area classes.


Summary: The author claims that the only way to assess student comprehension is to look not only right answers but also for accompanying explanations of their reasoning. If the teacher tests only for right answers, she may miss students’ actual
lack of conceptual understanding. The author recommends the use of nine strategies for building mathematical understanding in struggling students. The nine strategies include: Determining and scaffolding the essential mathematics content, pacing lessons carefully, building a routine of support, fostering student interaction, making connections explicit, encouraging mental calculations, helping students use written calculations to track thinking, providing practice, and incorporating vocabulary instruction.

**Reflection:** I agree with the author that testing for comprehension means more than testing for right answers. Just as students who are able to decode may not necessarily be able to read for information, students may be able to answer mathematical questions without being able to apply concepts to life. In both scenarios students gain very little value from the tested skills. It is critical to make sure ESL students understand the concept behind the steps they are performing.

The author suggests that a teacher can tell if a math lesson has been scaffolded sufficiently for struggling students by how many students raise their hands at the end of the lesson when they are sent to do individual work. I agree that students should be asked to do on their own only what they are able to do independently. I am in favor of testing mathematical understanding; if testing for understanding occurred earlier in lessons and units, students would need less remediation later on.
Summary: The authors present the cognitive academic language learning approach (CALLA) as a method for preparing limited English language speakers for mainstream classes. The main goal of ESL programs is to prepare the students for academic success and independence. This approach to teaching language can be used in all types of ESL programs from bilingual, to pull out. The authors propose that many traditional second language programs focus on intercommunication skills and as a result release students long before they are ready to access academic subjects such as math, science, and social studies. They recommend that teachers begin teaching students to use English to learn subject matter.

CALLA focuses on three main principles: ESL curriculum is correlated with content area curriculum, language instruction is integrated with content instruction, and learning strategies are taught explicitly. The authors propose that the implementation of CALLA will strengthen ESL students’ academic English proficiency and prepare them for independence in mainstream content classes.

Reflection: Academic language proficiency is a huge obstacle for many ESL students. It is important that students are ready to succeed in their content area classrooms before their language supports are removed. But, unless students have been taught
the language basics in their content areas it is unrealistic to expect them to be ready for academic independence. I agree with the three principles of CALLA. Anytime a teacher coordinates their curriculum with the core academic curriculum they will be strengthening students’ background knowledge. This will lessen the language burden on students when they are exposed to content outside of their ESL class. I also believe that teaching students strategies is very effective for helping them become independent learners.

Section 3: Programs & Methods


**Summary:** This book builds the case for using extensive reading activities in the foreign or ESL classroom. It proposes ten guiding principles for implementing extensive reading. The authors claim the benefits of extensive reading programs to include: more extensive vocabularies, positive attitude toward reading, as well as improved listening, reading, writing and comprehension skills in the second language. They propose activities that can be adapted for any age or proficiency level as long as the program is guided by ten principles. The reading should be easy, be self-selected, and be modeled by the teacher. The selection should be chosen to
enjoy or inform, encourage guessing and inference of vocabulary, and promote fluent reading,

The book is made up of four parts: organizing extensive reading, oral fluency, writing, and finally, reading. All chapters give detailed examples of extensive reading activities that will support the main areas of language development. The example lessons provide a framework that can be applied to the books in a classroom library as well as goals for the lesson, tips and extension activities and suggested ability level that each activity is appropriate for. The book features a great variety of activities from poetry and role-play to written reports and summaries.

**Reflection:** This is a very useful reference book for language teachers. It provides effective frameworks for great activities that a teacher could tweak to meet her specific curriculum goals, as well as the proficiency level of her students. I like how the book is organized. The chapters are well organized by topic and well titled to give a quick idea of the goals each activity sets. The chapters give a brief, about a page long framework for activities so they are very quick to read through, but provide enough information to make them immediately available for use.

Resources that are quick to read as well as easy to set up and implement are very useful for teachers. This book contains were many activities that could be applied to early elementary grades as well as be appropriate for older students or even adults. I think that the best types of activities and assignments can be successfully implemented on several ability levels. It is very unusual to have a group
of language students who are all performing on the same level. But activities and assignments that can be challenging and appropriate on many ability levels keep the curriculum appropriate and challenging for all students.


**Summary:** This article focuses on ESL in the primary grades. The authors claim that education during these early years is critical to student’s future academic careers. What happens during the first few years of ESL students’ education provides the building blocks for later academic performance. The authors provide practical suggestions to implement into an education program during the beginning years to help prepare students academically for the future. They also rank each suggestion in terms of research support for its claims of success.

**Reflection:** The National clearinghouse for Education is an excellent website which provides access to independent research done on specific programs. It also scores programs in terms of research done for serving minority groups and ESL. It offers reports and makes suggestions on effective teaching strategies for different groups.
Summary: This article explains that, when students learn a new language, new ideas or terms can only have meaning if they can first be attached to something the student already knows. The authors claim that meaning is not inherent to a text itself but is created in combination with the writer's intent and the reader's interpretation. This involves the reader's background knowledge, referred to as schema. According to schema theory background knowledge is crucial to students' ability to comprehend text.

The best readers are able to make predictions and inferences from the text allowing them freedom from relying solely on text for creating meaning. Students with schemas and other background knowledge that include information similar to that of the writer gain meaningful information from the new language faster than those from entirely different backgrounds. Thus, background knowledge can assist students in overcoming other language barriers.

Reflection: I have noticed in some of my classes that certain students had very limited background knowledge in many of my science units. These students really
struggled to get past the very basic vocabulary I was using since they had no previous understanding about the concept. I have taught other students who spoke very limited English the same concepts yet because of their previous background knowledge they mastered the material much quicker than their peers. Background knowledge is very important for comprehension. Teachers need assess what students already know about a topic so they know what background holes they need to address before introducing new material.

I have also noticed that many student textbooks try to access student’s schemas by first presenting known information and then linking it to new terms or topics. It is important for teachers to recognize these patterns in texts and teach their students to recognize them so that they can become better at making inferences and predictions during their reading.


**Summary:** In the past, ESL teachers were encouraged to talk very little so that students had sufficient time to talk. Now teachers are encouraged to focus on the communicative quality of their talk. Teachers are a source of input only if they are talking and the students comprehending. Quality talk is defined as authentic talk or talk that is used for communicative purposes outside the classroom as well. It is
critical that communicative talk is created not only by the teacher in lectures but consists of the give and take between the students and the teacher.

The use of referential questions, responding to students' feedback, modifying speech, and negotiating meanings with students are all examples of ways a teacher's talk can be communicative. However, if a teacher is responding with feedback only to correct grammar usage or syntax, that does not qualify as communicative talk because it is not socially appropriate outside of a classroom setting and is not used in daily communications. Likewise, echoing students' responses, or looking for predictable feedback, are examples of non-communicative talk. However, these so called "non-communicative" forms of speech are necessary and communicative within a classroom environment. The author recommends that teachers not be overly concerned with using only speech used for communicative purposes outside the classroom. Rather, teachers should be concerned with their ability to, question and elicit answers, respond to students, present and explain, and their ability to provide meaningful corrections.

**Reflection:** Being able to effectively communicate with students, as well as helping them effectively communicate with others are two critical skills for a teacher. A language teacher has the added responsibility of not only modeling teacher/student talk, but appropriate ways to communicate in many different social settings as well. If a teacher were constrained by all the social etiquette rules that are used in social settings, students would not have a good resource for language development and
could not receive the necessary correction from their teacher but instead, would be left to their own devices or to the corrections of impolite people outside of the school setting. Language classrooms need to be an environment where students are safe to make mistakes and know that they will receive appropriate feedback that will assist them in improving their communicative abilities in and out of school.


**Summary:** This book is useful for ESL teachers as well as for the general education teacher of ESL students. It discusses the shift in trends regarding ESL assessment from traditional assessment methods to authentic assessments, which allow students to provide workable information on their academic understanding of content to their teachers. The authors believe that when provided with a variety of authentic assessment options, students will be able to convey their understanding better and take a personal interest and develop the skills needed to actively participate in the direction of their education. This book covers a variety of authentic assessments that range from collaborative assessments to self-assessment, including assessments of student's oral, reading, and writing skills, as well as content area assessments. The book also provides useful rubrics and skill tracking sheets that can be used in a classroom.
**Reflection:** This book made me want to do better at assessing my ESL students. It was especially applicable in a regular educational setting. This book helped me re-evaluate the assessments that I currently use and have used in the past. If an assessment is only measuring what a student cannot do it does not provide useful information for the student or the teacher. Instead, assessments should measure what students are able to do and measure what they do know. Assessments do not have to look like traditional high stakes tests, but they should measure a student's abilities and provide useful information for directing instruction.


**Summary:** A teacher who began her career as a neurologist and then later became a teacher wrote this book. She claims that having an understanding of how the human brain attains, stores, connects, retains, and accesses information will assist teachers in presenting curriculum to maximize student access, retention, and recall of curriculum taught. The book has four main sections: memory/learning and test taking success, strategies to captivate student attention, the effects of stress and emotion on learning, and assessment that builds dendrites. The book provides useful neurological research based strategies to increase student learning. It discusses the neurological strengths and weaknesses of a growing mind, and how best to access
those strengths and assist students in building neurological connections. Many of the strategies are not very complicated and include things as simple as taking breaks. This book provides neurological reasons why the strategies it presents are critical to students’ academic success.

Reflection: I loved reading this book and thought it had great suggestions on how to assist students in accessing curriculum. I think it is especially important for groups of students like ESL students who need to learn a lot of material in a relatively short amount of time. Teachers should assist these students by presenting material in a neurologically friendly way. An ESL student may easily become overwhelmed, especially if the teacher is not using appropriate teaching strategies that reduce stress on the brain and assist it in accessing and retaining information.


Summary: Teacher’s Handbook covers a range of topics related to language teaching but focuses on using language for communicative purposes. It covers topics like language teaching and special education, the use of technology, teaching of culture, and techniques for language acquisition and retention. Whether one is teaching grammar or oral communication, the authors argue that language taught in meaningful or real-life contexts leads to better results in language learning. The book provides useful and applicable strategies for developing a communicative,
meaning-based classroom, as well as references for research, which would be useful in justifying program changes.

The authors also emphasize teaching language in a contextualized setting to allow not only for communicative competence but also for cultural/academic or content understanding in L2. The authors provide case studies to demonstrate strategies covered.

Reflection: I really enjoyed reading this book; it was very applicable to my current position as a content-teacher of L2 and L1 students. The techniques provided in this book apply not only in a language class but in my content classes as well. They help to make my content classes more accessible to my L2 students as well as assist them in their language development. This book was especially useful to me because many language programs that I have been expected to teach still support the teaching of language as separate skills and focus heavily on grammar drills and definitions to teach language. This book demonstrates a different and more effective way of teaching language.


Summary: The authors acknowledge the difficulties that general education teachers face as an increasing number of ESL students are mainstreamed into their
classrooms. It discusses issues related to student background and social factors that may impact students. It confirms that despite the educational, linguistic, socio-cultural differences among them, this population is capable of achieving high academic standards if they are given the appropriate accommodations. This book covers many topics relating to the effective teaching of ESL students. The book was written for regular education teachers but discusses a broad spectrum of ESL programs and their relative strengths and weaknesses, such as dual language immersion and pull out ESL. It suggests the use of authentic literature and other effective tools in second language teaching as well as ways to implement them into an ESL curriculum.

Reflection: This book was given to all of Utah’s ESL teachers by the head of the Office of Civil Rights in Utah. She told us that it was full of research that could be used when discussing program directions with our districts. While the book presents many challenges ESL students and their teachers face, it is very optimistic and shows how these challenges can and must be overcome. This book has many great strategies for teaching an academically and ethnically diverse group of students.
Section 4: Culture and Language


**Summary:** This article is about NFM (negotiation for meaning) what it is and how it impacts language development. On the belief that interactional adjustments of language improve the comprehensibility of conversation the authors designed a study to gain data on the frequency of the use of negation for meaning specifically, and to seek if any, other language functions that assist with comprehension and language development. In the study it was found that signaling for communication problems as well as negotiating for meaning is uncommon. That negotiation for meaning, is just one of many other ways to improve comprehension of the language. Assistance and co-construction of language are used much more frequently and also serve to correct language usage and comprehension. Based on their results they recommend interactive language learning opportunities in a non-face-threatening environment to promote language development.

**Reflection:** I loved this article on negotiation for meaning. It focused not only on how learners use negotiation for meaning to correct or signal their misunderstanding but also processes that learners apply to prevent communication
breakdowns. I feel that all these processes are important in language development. There were many that can easily be fostered by a conscientious teacher in a L2 classroom such as a non-face threatening environment of assistance and scaffolding when appropriate. It makes sense to me that speakers of the target language are more likely to apply less face threatening acts than negotiating for meaning. However, I was especially interested in negotiating for meaning because I felt that it was something the majority of my students were never comfortable doing outside the language classroom and I felt it would be important to their academic studies to ask for clarification.


Summary: This book covers everything from the history and laws that have driven Dual Language and ESL programs to the best practices of various second language programs. The authors point out that while research supports active learning and students’ use of language to problem solve as key to language development, research has also found that the majority of ESL and Bilingual classrooms are very teacher oriented and students are called on to give simple answers. This book problematizes the issues that are faced in ESL and Bilingual education in this country as well as the implications of unsuccessful programs.
This book presents best practices for ESL and Bilingual education programs. The authors recommend the use of activities that are cognitively challenging and interesting as well as encourage critical thinking. They encourage the use of multisensory activities to promote understanding and retention. They encourage the use of academic and social language to be emphasized in every lesson.

The authors highlight the issues of background knowledge and academic proficiency many ESL students will face and suggests that math and science areas be taught in the students' first language. As this is not always feasible, they suggest the use of sheltered ESL instruction in academic and content areas. They also propose the integration of reading, writing, and culture into other content areas, specifically math and science. The authors demonstrate successful ways to assess second language learners' knowledge and stress the importance of allowing those assessments to guide future instruction.

**Reflection**: This is a good book for those who are curious about the different models of second language instruction, and their strengths and weaknesses, as well as how to make each model as successful as possible. I enjoyed learning about the history and legal aspects of ESL as well as the ramifications that legislation has had on the education of second language learners.

This book also helps those discussing curriculum and justifying methods of instruction in language programs with administration or anyone else that shares
responsibility with educating and preparing second language learners for academic proficiency. I am a proponent of integrating reading and writing into other academic areas and have seen that reading and writing across the curriculum has made a significant difference in the academic proficiency of my ESL students.


**Summary:** A veteran ESL teacher, who herself an immigrant student in her early education years wrote this book. She addresses many of the challenges that immigrant students face. Some of these challenges are fragmented schooling, war and refugee experiences, loneliness and loss, academic challenges, and cultural differences, all in addition to the difficulties of learning a new language. What she has learned from her experiences with immigrant students is that interventions need to be threefold: cultural, academic, and psychological.

Her book contains examples from her own as well as her students’ lives and experiences with schooling. The author believes that it is important that students have opportunities to share their story. When her students would make videos that paralleled their life experiences, their ability to share seemed to help get them ready for academic pursuits. The importance of validating cultural differences and teaching from a multicultural perspective and how to accomplish that is discussed. The author suggests making links and writing about culture. She stresses the importance of building good relationships with families and creating a link between home and
school. It is also critical to provide appropriate assistance for ESL students while helping them become independent learners and problem solvers.

**Reflection:** This personal yet professional account highlights many problems that ESL students face. I think that sometimes the problems these students face are oversimplified by our school system as strictly a language barrier. This book illustrates with examples from real students' lives that the academic and social challenges this population faces is often multifaceted and complex.

I think it is good to understand where some of these students are coming from so that curriculum goals and standards are based on a more complete picture of who it is that is being taught and better meeting their needs. In my experience teaching an immigrant population, the vignettes in this book brought to memory many of my students, their histories, and the many challenges they had to overcome in addition to the academic and social standards they were expected to meet.

I think that each class, each population, as well as each individual in a given class has unique educational and emotional needs. It is necessary for the teacher to be aware of those needs and make adjustments as necessary. I agree that validating students' history and culture makes a significant impact in building rapport with students and families that results ultimately in an environment where academic success can become a reality.

**Summary:** This book defines pragmatics as the “relationship between routines and forms of particular speech acts and the contextual factors of particular situations” (p. 4). The authors argue that pragmatic skills need to be considered when teaching communicative competence. It is pragmatics that communicate politeness in a given language and society. The authors recommend knowing why foreign language students are learning the language and to allow that knowledge to determine the pragmatic needs of the student and to adjust curriculum accordingly. This book is a compilation of works by different practitioners and researchers in applied linguistics and foreign language studies. The chapters in this book all fit into one of three areas; how pragmatics can be learned, how pragmatics can be taught, and how pragmatics can be assessed. An underlying theme in all chapters is that it is necessary and possible to teach pragmatics in a foreign language class.

**Reflection:** Pragmatic competence is extremely important in second language teaching. Pragmatics is so tied into culture that it is difficult to know what or how to teach these language skills. This book gives suggestions such as role-play for which the teacher is able to explain and model, and then allow students to practice pragmatic skills to discover how pragmatics work in different situations. It also helps
determine what to teach as it discusses what is and isn’t important with pragmatics and what should and shouldn’t be a priority to teach. It also suggests basing those priorities on students’ needs and purposes for learning the foreign language. My students in public school will need to interact in English for social, professional, and academic purposes. It is critical that they gain the knowledge and pragmatic competence to be able to communicate effectively in a variety of settings. In elementary schools one hears a lot about “educating the whole child” and preparing students to be successful in many aspects of their lives. I believe that the learning of pragmatic skills is necessary for the success of second language learners and that those skills should therefore be explicitly taught.


Summary: This book covers many topics related to language. It discusses: what language is, and how much language is learned vs. instinct. It covers language rules, and exceptions, as well as how language is initially developed in infants vs. how it is acquired later in life by second language learners. Pinker ties together the many seemingly different topics to the overreaching theme of the similarity of language across cultures: language serves the same purpose to human beings throughout the world regardless of the specific language used. Likewise, despite the different languages developed by humans, they are acquired in the same way, even with the
predictable mistakes made by second language learners or young first language learners.

When discussing difficult topics that range from the biology, etymology, and features of language, the author provides concrete examples, which in most cases can easily be related to by a reader generally unfamiliar with linguistics.

Reflection: At first, this book was difficult for me to read: its ideas seemed abstract and it included a lot of technical vocabulary. However, the author provided great everyday examples presented with interesting humor, which illustrated the information he was presenting.

Though this book was not specifically written with second language teachers in mind, or even as a source for teaching techniques or methodology, I did find that gaining more understanding about how language is initially acquired and some of the biology behind language has given me some great insights for ways to approach teaching a second language. I also gained insights into the function of errors in developing language, and has affected the way I will address those types of mistakes in the future.

Summary: This article reports on a study of deaf Nicaraguan children and adults who learned Nicaraguan Sign Language (their first language) at differing ages. The study was performed to explore the idea of the critical period theory, which posits that there is a critical period (i.e., a window of opportunity) for the development of language. If the critical period is missed, the window closes and it becomes increasingly difficult to acquire the language.

It was found that the deaf children who were exposed to sign language after the age of ten were unable to perform on the same linguistic level as their peers who were exposed to the language before the age of ten. In accordance with the critical period theory, the authors conclude that not being exposed to language before the age of ten will lead to long-term language deficits.

Reflection: The argument for critical language period is very strong in regards to exposure to a first language. However, adult learners of a second language have different skills that will assist them in the development of a second language. They have background knowledge about language as well as specific genres and ideas that can be transferred and relabeled in the second language. We know that development of CALP is a common problem in the second language acquisition of children who are being expected to gain concepts that had not yet developed in their first language. It would seem that this would be a much smaller problem when dealing with adult learners.
With my background in special education, I know how important it is that as educators we prioritize language development from the moment we begin working with our students who have limited language exposure or abilities.
LOOKING FORWARD
LOOKING FORWARD

My teaching license qualifies me to teach first to eighth grade. I currently teach first grade and enjoy the variety that teaching at the elementary level allows. Next year, I look forward to teaching first grade for the second time. This will be the first time that I have taught the same class two years in a row. Now that I have finished my schooling, I want to improve my skills as a practitioner. There are two main areas that I am interested in pursuing: how to better meet the needs of my students and how to better mentor future teachers.

As a first grade teacher I will service students who have limited English proficiency. My education thus far will help me to better meet their academic and linguistic needs. But I will also service students with other specific academic and social needs. As a teacher my job is to teach all my students the foundational skills that they will need to be successful in their academic careers. One thing I have learned as a practitioner is that no two classes have the same needs. I would like to seek continued training as I see holes in my education so as to improve my ability to perform my job at a higher level.

In addition to teaching first grade, part of my position is to mentor university students, future teachers. I hope to improve my ability to mentor these students so that, when these students take their first jobs, they will not only know content and methods but also have the resources and confidence in their ability to adapt to the
teaching environments and the specific needs of the populations that they will

service in their careers.


http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com/hww/results/external_link_maincontentframe.jhtml?


Sources:


