**English Language Learner Resources**

Anderson, V, & Roit, M (1996). Linking reading comprehension instruction to language

development for language-minority students. *The Elementary School Journal*. *96*, 295-

309. (Erin Watson)

Barrera, M., Liu, K., Thurlow, M. & Chamberlain, S. (2006). *Use of chunking and questioning*

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Boyle, Owen F., & Peregoy, S. F. (1990). Literacy scaffolds: strategies for first- and second-

language readers and writers. *The Reading Teacher*. *44*, 194-200. (Yvonne Fletcher)

Brown, C.L. (2007).Supporting English language learners in content-reading. *Reading*

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Carrison, C., & Ernst-Slavit, G. (2005). From silence to a whisper to active participation: Using

literature circles with ELL students. *Reading Horizons*. *46 no 2*, 93-113. (Bobbi

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Anderson, V, & Roit, M (1996). Linking reading comprehension instruction to language

development for language-minority students. *The Elementary School Journal*. *96*, 295-

309.

This article researches the use of reading comprehension instruction to develop oral language in language-minority students. The two researchers observed students in grades 1-8 and formed six teaching skills that could be taught to English language learners to increase their reading comprehension and language development. The researchers comprised ten instructional suggestions that focus on primary language, cognitive strengths, and social skills of language-minority students.

Currently in the classroom, most instruction is based on the idea that growth in reading is dependent on spoken language. Many researchers and educators believe that delaying reading comprehension instruction for ELLs until they are fluent in English is a huge mistake. Unfortunately, “for many students, instruction in reading comprehension is frequently minimized or delayed in favor of instructional efforts toward oral language proficiency” (p. 296). Regardless, there is little literature that explains how to teach ELLs to understand what they read while they are learning English fluency. Goodman suggested that reading in English can start when students begin to show a receptive understanding of English, especially if they are literate in their first language (1979). Barrera states that students should not be limited by their oral language and that they learn English by reading in context (1983).

For the past seven years, the researchers have observed students in grades 1-6 in the United States and grades 6-8 in Canada. The ESL students that they worked with the most include: Hispanic, East Indian, Chinese, Vietnamese, Iranian, Greek, Italian, and West Indian. The goal of this study was to provide teachers with knowledge in strategy instruction for reading comprehension so that they could apply these suggestions in the classroom.

The researchers collected research, interviewed teachers and administrators, observed the instruction of literacy in various classrooms, and analyzed videotaped teaching sessions. Based on the information they gathered, the authors identified 6 instructional recommendations to build ELLs reading comprehension and language development. The researchers “focus on reading comprehension as a gateway to language development, rather than on proficient language as a prerequisite to reading” (p. 297). The following 6 abilities are suggested for teachers to implement in their classroom with English language learners.

The first skill is English Language Flexibility. The knowledge to say something in more than one way is a difficult concept to grasp for English language learners. They might be able to answer a question because they can decode, but might not even know what their answers mean. Researchers believe that ELLs should communicate in their first language to connect the information to the English language. “Teaching in which students are expected to respond only in English could similarly foster inflexibility. Numerous researchers have contended that allowing students to use their first, or heritage, language to respond enhances second-language learning” (Cole & Griffen, 1987; Cummins, 1989; Goldman, Reyes, & Varnhagen, 1984; Lee, 1984; Moll, 1994). The next suggestion is the Use of Abstract and Less Imageable Basic Vocabulary. Learning the English vocabulary is a difficult process when the students are struggling to understand the text. The researchers recommend teaching more basic vocabulary like negatives, conjunctions, prepositions, and other abstract words that tie the English language together. For Consideration of Larger Contexts, the authors point out that sometimes teachers ask students to define a word multiple times throughout a text and this can decrease fluency and delay comprehension. “When an emphasis on ungeneralizable words is coupled with a neglect of the contexts in which they occur, students begin to concentrate on minutiae and ignore the meaning of the text as a whole” (p. 298). However, making predictions can help these students use the context. Determination of Important and Unimportant Text Segments is the 4th teaching ability. Students have trouble recognizing and remembering the main ideas of the text because they are not able to understand the context of what they read. Teachers need to model what is important in a text so the students are able to grasp information from the key points in the text. Elaboration of Responses is the next teaching ability to be developed with ELLs. Many speakers of other languages are scared to talk in class because they do not want to make mistakes or embarrass themselves. Most of the time these students are quiet and unfortunately do not get the practice they need in order to speak the English language. The 6th suggestion is Engagement in Natural Conversations. The researchers found that there is not a lot of time spent helping students engage in dialogue in the classroom. Conversations in the students’ homes have been proven to support the learning of a new language. If teachers promoted more natural conversations in the classroom, students would be able to interact with their classmates and learn the language together. These six abilities can be implemented in the classroom to increase students reading comprehension and language development.

The following ten suggestions recommend ways to teach English language learners. The suggestions help the teachers transfer what they already know about reading comprehension in general to their work with ELLs. The first activity is Shared Reading. This consists of a teacher reading and sharing a book with her students. Repeated readings are a known way to increase comprehension as the students get more and more familiar with the text. Vocabulary Networking is the second activity and is usually taught using graphic organizers such as webs or maps. Students arrange the vocabulary onto their organizer by drawing information from their experiences, conversations, and readings. The third suggestion is Expanding Contexts. By explaining what a word means, students can talk about why it is important to the passage and how it relates to their personal experience. The authors recommend illustrating vocabulary because it can put words into context with a visual representation. Predicting is the fourth activity and gives students an opportunity to talk about what they think is going to happen in a story. The next activity is Imagery and it allows students to create a mental image of something from the text. It is important for teachers talk about illustrations, but to also make sure that the illustrations support text understanding. A great activity is to let the students illustrate what they have read and this helps the teacher check if they comprehended what they read. Text Structures is the 6th suggestion and this activity increases ELLs comprehension. “This procedure involves teaching a text structure, such as problem/solution, by prompting students to ask a series of questions about text that correspond to the characteristics of its structure, for example What is the problem? What is the cause of the problem? What will happen if the problem continues? and How can the problem be solved? ” (p. 303). This activity improves reading comprehension, enhances language, teaches students to create important questions, and encourages discussion. The 7th activity is Questioning, Identifying Problems, and Sharing Strategies. “All students need to feel free to ask questions, tell others about problems they are having, and share and evaluate ideas for solving those problems” (Anderson & Roit, 1990, 1993). Collaborative strategy instruction encourages students to think aloud when trying to solve reading problems. Drawing on related background knowledge is another important strategy to use in reading. Researchers suggest questioning others, identifying the problem, and finding ways to fill gaps as we read are the best ways to learn (Anderson, 1994). Explaining Text is the 8th activity and suggests that students try to explain what the text means and then discuss and compare their explanations with their classmates. It is essential for the teacher to teach her students how to recognize what needs explaining in order for the student to make meaning from the information. Text explanation gives teachers an opportunity to determine if the students comprehend what they are reading. The 9th activity is Culturally Familiar Informational Texts and emphasizes the importance of incorporating students’ cultures into teaching. Including culturally familiar books in the classroom gives students the opportunity to share their personal experiences and teach their classmates new knowledge as well. Conversational Opportunities is the 10th and final activity the researchers suggested. When learning a new language, most people practice with a native speaker and ask questions to learn more about the language. Schools need to provide more opportunities for students to engage in conversation so they are able to grow as a reader and learner of the English language.

By following the suggestions the researchers provided, teachers will gain the knowledge necessary to help language-minority students learn English. The ideas described in this review are based on current research and “encourages students to use their primary language, natural social skills, and cognitive abilities to learn to use their new language as they learn to read” (p. 306). By implementing the activities above, English language learners will make significant progress in both reading comprehension and language development.

Barrera, M., Liu, K., Thurlow, M. & Chamberlain, S. (2006). *Use of chunking and questioning*

*aloud to improve the reading comprehension of English language learners with*

*disabilities* (ELLs with Disabilities Report 17). Minneapolis, MN: University of

Minnesota, National Center on Educational Outcomes.

Barrera, Liu, Thurlow, and Chamberlain (2006) conducted this study because, despite increased demands made by the federal mandate *No Child Left Behind*, little research has been done specifically in the area of instructional strategies to improve the reading comprehension of English Language Learners (ELLs) with learning disabilities. The researchers further argue that there is a need for more research, particularly at the middle school level. The literature reveals that ELLs entering U.S. public schools for the first time have had limited and interrupted schooling (McKeon, 1994). Thus, appropriate intervention for these students becomes even more crucial for students at this level. Also, the work load for middle schoolers requires greater cognitive demand—reading in content areas makes strategy instruction more of a necessity for comprehension, especially for struggling readers. Because little is known about how the first and second language are impacted by disability, the reason ELLs struggle is unknown (Klingner et al., 2006). However, students with reading difficulties are often characterized as learning disabled (Bender, 2003).

This study tracked the performance of four ELL students with learning disabilities as they received and implemented the Chunking and Questioning Aloud (CQA) strategy to improve reading comprehension. CQA (Thurlow et al., 2004) is a two part process involving reading aloud and then stopping at appropriate, pre-determined places in the text to check comprehension and ask questions. CQA is very similar to Stauffer’s (1969) Directed Reading Thinking Activity (DRTA), a problem-solving process in which students predict, read to confirm or disaffirm the prediction, and then make a new one as necessary. Bauman, Russell, and Jones (1992) looked at the effectiveness of think alouds on fourth graders’ reading comprehension. Learning disabled students were not in the study, but the results were significant in that the Think-Aloud and the DRTA were proven better at increasing reading comprehension than traditional teacher-led methods.

Barrera, Liu, Thurlow, and Chamberlain were guided by the related research in designing this study, especially in that they realized that the teachers needed explicit training and support with the strategy implemented, which they provided. The CQA strategy was chosen carefully, using the Multi-Attribute Consensus Building with classroom teachers (Thurlow et al., 2004) to select a strategy with the highest support in research.

This study used single case research to document causal relationships between the CQA strategy and reading comprehension in ELLs with learning disabilities. Two teachers participated in the study, and four students received CQA. Student S, a sixth grade eleven-year-old Somalian boy in Minnesota, had an undiagnosed learning disability and was placed with a speech-language teacher for extra help. Students T1, T2, and T3 are seventh grade Mexican American students in Texas working with a bilingual resource teacher. Student T1 was a fifteen-year-old girl with a reading-related disorder. Student T2 was a fourteen-year-old boy, also with a reading-related disability. Student T3 was a fifteen-year-old boy with a learning disability and an emotional/behavioral disorder.

Baseline and post intervention scores were collected and documented. The baseline data collected included state-test results, IEP records, and content area test results. Student S was taught at his instructional level in reading (grade three) rather than at his grade level. Students T1, T2, and T3 were taught at their grade level (7). Both teachers measured the progress in reading comprehension solely at the literal level.

Student S participated in the study for two and a half months between March and June of 2005. The instructional objective for him was that he would read proficiently at grade level, meaning with 90% accuracy and 90% comprehension. He was taught the CQA strategy with content area reading, primarily in Social Studies and was gradually weaned from teacher support with the strategy. Student S showed significant improvement, from 20% pre-test to 100% post-test on a curriculum based classroom reading sample, using the maze procedure in which a three-word choice is given for every seventh word in a reading passage (Shin, Deno, and Espin, 2000). His state-based reading sample scores showed gains from 20% to 50%. His reading accuracy stayed at 85-95% during the course of the study. Student S showed more progress as he internalized the CQA strategy.

Students T1, T2, and T3 participated in the study for thirty six school days in the spring of 2005. The instruction was interrupted for a week for statewide testing. The instructional objective for these students was taken from the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for English Language Arts and Reading (Texas Education Agency, 1998, chapter 110), with the goal that students monitor their comprehension and use strategies when meaning breaks down. They were taught the CQA with grade level reading material. At this location, not only was comprehension measured, but the teacher also developed a rubric to score the students’ success in implementing the CQA strategy.

Student T1 began mastering the CQA strategy after her absences for testing. Then, she was able to use the strategy with facility. Her comprehension scores on the CBM Maze rose from 61% to 73%. Student T2 never became adept at using CQA. He had frequent absences from class during intervention. However, his reading comprehension scores rose from 50% to 82%. Student t3 learned CQA steadily and kept strong reading comprehension. His score went from 79% to 95%.

All student scores on the reading comprehension measure (CBM MAZE) rose pre-test to post-test. This study shows that the students (T2 and Student S) were the lowest performing prior to intervention and made the greatest gains. Also, this study demonstrates the effectiveness of the CQA strategy in helping ELLs with learning disabilities better their reading comprehension. However, larger studies need to be done to substantiate these findings.

Boyle, Owen F., & Peregoy, S. F. (1990). Literacy scaffolds: strategies for first- and second-

language readers and writers. *The Reading Teacher*. *44*, 194-200.

The authors of this article have given numerous workshops and are frequently asked for information that would address literacy needs of both the mainstream and second-language learners in the same classroom. To meet this request, Boyle and Peregoy observed classrooms, read books and articles, and collected information on strategies they call “literacy scaffolds.” These are activities that include “temporary frameworks that offer students immediate access to the meanings and pleasure of print” (p. 194).

*“Scaffolding* refers to special ways adults may elaborate and expand upon children’s early attempts to use language, thereby facilitating effective communication at a level somewhat beyond the child’s actual linguistic capability (Bruner, 1978; Cazden, 1980).” All children experience this as they begin to learn to talk when parents elaborate on their simple one or two word phrases. Storybook reading is an example of another early activity which provides a scaffold as it models language and story patterns. The social interactions that take place during the reading and sharing enable the child to experience the literature in a way that is beyond their ability on their own.

“One essential characteristic of literacy scaffolds is the use of natural, whole texts for purposeful communication” (p. 195). The student will have “multiple cues from which to draw meaning: graphophonic, syntactic, and semantic as well as situational and contextual (Goodman, 1986).” Whole language activities inspire students as they feel more competent in their second language and are encouraged to further develop their skills.

Research supports that both first and second- language learners gain literacy proficiency through very similar learning processes. “For example, second-language readers make use of graphic, syntactic, and semantic cues provided in a text to predict and confirm meaning, much as first-language readers do (Clarke, 1980; Cziko, 1978, 1980; Goodman & Goodman, 1978).” There are two characteristics of second-language learners that make their learning a more difficult process. These are limited second-language proficiency (Clarke, 1980; Cziko, 1980), lack of background knowledge because of experiences that do not correspond to the content of typical school texts (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1988). Strategies to enhance reading acquisition include building pertinent background knowledge, use of repetitive language patterns in meaningful literacy activities (p. 196).

Writing development in second-language learners also goes through similar stages as their mainstream peers. Their use of drawings adds to their understanding and expression. Students who are literate in their first language gain an understanding of their second language more quickly because of the similarities in the rules regarding text (p.196).

Literacy scaffold models have five main characteristics: they are aimed at functional, meaningful communication; they use language and discourse patterns that repeat themselves and are predictable; these scaffolds provide models to develop comprehension and written language patterns; they allow for comprehension and writing at a level slightly beyond what they can do on their own; and finally, they are a temporary support that is removed when the student no longer needs them. (p. 196). Examples of literacy scaffolds that fit these criteria are sentence patterns, patterned reading and writing, discourse patterns such as Directed Reading-Thinking Activity (DRTA) and story maps. Boyle and Peregoy describe two teachers’ use of the last two discourse pattern activities in her classroom.

During DRTA, the first teacher discussed the story topic prior to her class reading to activate and develop prior knowledge, which is essential for second-language learners. She then progressed by asking students to predict about the content of the story based on the title, as well stopping at appropriate points within the reading to question and having students predict. If necessary, she paraphrased portions of the story and stopped to point out the pictures which helped develop meaning for all students (p. 198).

Another teacher used story mapping which helped students identify the basic elements of the story by filling the responses to “someone…, wants…, but…, so…” In this way they were able to identify the main character, their conflict, the climax, and finally, the resolution. By working in collaborative groups, students were able to experience “peer interaction and support from more advanced English speakers” (p. 198).

As they returned to the classrooms where literacy scaffolds were being used as described in their research, Boyles and Peregoy found “that scaffolding activities facilitate successful encounters with print, make reading a joy from the beginning, and show children early on that they can learn to read and write” (p. 199).

Brown, C.L. (2007).Supporting English language learners in content-reading. *Reading*

*Improvement*. *44 no 1*, 32-39.

This article is a review of the literature and research pertinent to the language acquisition and reading comprehension of English Language Learners (ELLs). Brown (2007) makes recommendations of best practices to aid the reading comprehension of ELLs in the content areas.

A look at the research reveals several important facts. Data shows that there is an increasing influx of ELL students in U.S. public schools. From 1991 to 2001, this population increased overall by 95%, with much larger growth being documented in some southern states (Padolsky, 2002). As this population enlarges, all educators need strategies for aiding ELLs in their learning. Reading is crucial to learning, and being a good reader is often a prerequisite for student achievement (Bishop, 2003; Krashen, 1995). Reading is not just an isolated skill used in language arts: all content areas require reading. In fact, reading in the content areas is often more taxing for all students, especially ELLs, because of the decontextualized nature of the text. Cummins (1984, 2000) characterizes decontextualized texts as having few context clues to aid with meaning and as being presented in an expository style rather than a narrative one. These texts make more cognitive demands of students at the middle school and secondary level (Brown, 2006; Chamot, 1995).

Cummins (1981, 1984, 1996) makes two distinctions for ELL language acquisition. The language of social discourse he refers to as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS). The academic language is known as Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). It usually takes a student 2-3 years to gain proficiency in social discourse (BICS). Acquiring CALP is a more arduous process and takes 5-7 years. This distinction is important for educators to note because too often, teachers assume that a student who is able to carry on conversations should also be able to read and write at grade level. The reason BICS take less time to acquire is that these skills develop in a communicative context, where feedback and clarification occurs immediately. Also, conversations tend to be short, fragmented, and use simple vocabulary. An ELL child thrust into academic texts before ready will not fare well because they often do not have relevant background knowledge, the vocabulary is more difficult and abstract, the syntax is more complex, ideas are densely expressed, and graphics can provide overwhelming amounts of information. Academic language in texts does not have the same context clues that conversations afford: facial expressions, body language, and tone of voice.

Brown recommends several strategies to accommodate the ELL in an inclusion content area class. She points out that these strategies work well with any struggling reader. Her first recommendation involves the use of content maps, especially to help introduce important concepts prior to reading. Brown feels that the concept map is an important tool because they “help make content transparent by showing how parts of the text are related” (p. 36). The use of these maps provide a necessary visual aid and can help ensure that ELLs do not get lost in the text because they make the text more comprehensible, especially if the teacher refers back to the map as ideas listed are encountered in the text.

Brown’s second recommendation is the use of guiding questions to make the content reading a less overwhelming undertaking. These guiding questions “will help ELLs pay selective attention to the parts of the text that contain the pertinent information, and it will prevent them from getting mired in minute details” (p. 37). Her final recommendation is to allow ELLs to read an adapted version of the text, a simpler version, which Brown feels is acceptable as long as the content is similar. She theorizes: “The knowledge they gain will help them access the content of grade level texts” (p. 37). Reading texts at their instructional reading level and reading them often will help ELLs to acquire academic language (Krashen, 2004).

Brown concludes this article by appealing to the classroom teachers’ sense of duty. She explains that ELL students need help learning to read and need scaffolding to access academic texts. It is all teachers’ duty to provide this support for ELLs rather than to just “remain passive until ELLs gain full proficiency in English” (p. 38). Instead, educators should use Brown’s strategies when teaching ELLs and should make a concerted effort to integrate reading instruction in the content areas. To an extent, all educators should consider themselves reading teachers.

Carrison, C., & Ernst-Slavit, G. (2005). From silence to a whisper to active participation: Using

literature circles with ELL students. *Reading Horizons*. *46 no 2*, 93-113.

Learners learn best when actively engaged in the process. Numerous studies have proven the effectiveness of literature circles in engaging students in the reading process as well as in social discourse about the text read (Peterson and Eeds, 1990; Schlick, Noe, and Johnson, 1999; Short and Klassen, 1993). Inherent in the nature of literary circles is the interaction in a safe environment where all students feel welcomed and empowered to share their thoughts and opinions about the texts (Martinex-Roldan and Lopez-Robertson, 1999/2000; Short and Klassen, 1993). Stephen Krashen (1993), a noted English Language Learner (ELL) researcher and theorist, put forth his affective filter hypothesis, stating that when a student learning a second language feels supported, not stressed out, and emotionally safe, his/her affective filter is lowered, thus allowing the student more access and ease to language learning, reading included.

The changing demographics in the United States make it more important than ever to meet the needs of ELLs. The way these needs are met has changed a great deal recently due to the federal mandate *No Child Left Behind* which stipulates that students are not eligible for language services after two to three years of schooling in the US. Therefore, more and more teachers are finding ELL students mainstreamed or included in the regular classroom and need tools to teach these children (Ernst-Slavit, Moore, and Maloney, 2002).

In this study, Carrison and Ernst-Slavit (2005) used literary circles with Carrison’s fourth grade class, consisting of twenty-four students, five of which were ELLs from various backgrounds. Two students’ L2 was Ukrainian, two spoke Spanish, and one spoke Russian. They also received a variety of language support at school, from pull-out programs to inclusion. The Qualitative Reading Inventory (QRI-11) was administered prior to the implementation of the literature circles; only the Russian student scored at grade level. The other ELL students scored from pre-primer to level 3.

This study was conducted to find out two things: whether literature circles improved the reading skills of ELLs and whether the process improved their motivation to read. Materials for this study included books with multi-cultural themes, rich language, and interesting plots such as *Hiroshima, Esperanza Rising,* and *Journey to America.*

Prior to implementing literature circles, Carrison and Ernst-Slavit consulted several sources on which they modeled their program. The two main books that provided the basis for their design were *Literature Circles in a Multicultural Classroom* (Samway and Whang, 1996) and *Getting Started with Literature Circles* (Noe and Johnson, 1999). These resources guided them in selecting the roles for the circles, in selecting appropriate books, and gave ideas for the extension projects. The purpose of the extension projects was to “help students enrich their conversations and deepen their comprehension of the books” (p. 4). Carrison and Ernst-Slavit also relied on Harvey Daniel’s (1994) book, *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* for theoretical framework, assessment strategies, and a schedule.

To begin the literature circles, the books were first previewed to the students through a book talk. Then, the students wrote down their top three picks and were grouped accordingly rather than by reading ability. Students in each group met and set reading goals, goals that provided group motivation to read. For two-three weeks, they read and discussed the books, wrote responses in a reading log, and did two to three extension projects.

After the first book was read, students reflected on the process. These reflections and teacher observations showed positive changes in students’ attitudes about reading. Also as a result of observations, changes in the implementation of the literature circles were made. For instance, the teacher demonstrated the literature circle whole class so that students were more certain of the process and expectations. Mini-lessons in the second round were more focused so they were not overwhelming and encompassed tips for active reading, and strategies for making personal connections to the books while reading. The extension activity requirement was reduced: “The lesson learned here in terms of the extension activities is that especially with ELL students, those who lack confidence or readers who are reluctant to engage—less is more” (p. 8).

The reading comprehension of all the students, ELL or not, improved markedly, as evidenced by performance on the QRI-II post test. The two lowest ELL readers “increased their reading abilities by at least one grade level” (p. 11).The most noticeable growth in the ELL students occurred in their social discourse. Whereas before literature circles, several of these students were quiet, soft spoken, and reluctant to participate, after being a part of the reading circle, these same students began to take leadership roles among their peers. They found their voices through active participation in the reading process. Also, twenty-one students answered on a post-survey that reading was for fun, as compared to sixteen such responses on the pre-survey. Thus, reading attitudes made positive growth. Nine students felt that they needed help reading prior to literature circles; this number fell to six afterwards. Most encouraging was the fact that ten students on the pre-survey felt that the read as well as most of their peers; seventeen students held this attitude after participating in literature circles.

Results from this study indicate that literature circles are highly effective, especially for ELLs, in the area of improving reading comprehension. The collaborative learning and rich discussions about literature allows those with lower reading abilities to learn from those with higher reading abilities and to experience validation of their ideas and opinions. Their anxiety about reading is reduced, and because reading is in part a social activity, their motivation is increased. Finally, the students showed huge gains in reading comprehension, supporting the idea that literature circles, when implemented properly, are an excellent model of reading instruction, especially for lower readers, ELLs included.

Cooper, T. (1999). Processing of idioms by L2 learners of English. *Tesol Quarterly, 33,* 233-

262.

Perhaps one of the hardest concepts for the language arts teacher to communicate to students is figurative language. So many students trapped in their concrete thinking struggle with the abstract nature of figurative language, but especially language-disordered students and English as second language (ESL) learners. Idioms are “expressions whose meaning cannot always be readily derived from the usual meaning of its constituent elements” (p. 233). A dictionary proves ineffective to interpret idioms. For example, how does one know that *“to kick the bucket”* or *“bite the dust”* means *to die*” (p. 233)? Cooper found a lack of research regarding how ESL students’ best tackled unfamiliar idioms and what strategies worked most effectively in aiding comprehension, so he designed this study to address that issue.

Cooper begins his paper with an overview of popular thought regarding how native language learners process idioms. One of the earliest theories suggested that readers first processed each word literally and then if the meaning did not fit with the context quickly readjusted and found the figurative meaning instead. However, timed interpretation trials soon showed that for certain idioms no lag time exited between processing literal words and figurative idioms. This gave rise to another theory that idioms are stored and retrieved just as words from the mental lexicon -- particularly common idioms. The current accepted theory delineates between types of idioms. Research done by Gibbs (1994) and Tabossi & Zardon (1995) revealed that subjects “needed significantly less time to process decomposable idioms – that is, idioms in which the figurative and literal meanings are close (e.g. *hit the jackpot*) – than to process non-decomposable idioms – that is, idioms in which the literal meaning offers no clue for the construction on the figurative meaning (e.g. *kick the bucket*)” (p. 236). This finding suggests that people do use literal meanings of words to help make sense of meaning and context, therefore, idioms that lend themselves to their literal meanings are easier to process, but after initial analysis if the literal meaning does not fit context a person negotiates meaning out of their mental lexicon to make meaning fit context.

Most of the research done previously focused on the transfer from a native language (L1) to English (L2) for ESL students (Irujo, 1986; Kellerman, 1978, 1970, 1983; Ellis 1994). Results suggested that idioms are more easily understood if there is a close equivalent in a students’ native language. None of these previous articles studied how an ESL student went about interpreting idioms, so Cooper investigated the strategies used to understand idioms and if some idioms were easier to understand than others.

Cooper recruited a total of 18 non-native speakers with various L1 backgrounds for this study. Ages of participants ranged from 17 to 44 years with the average age being 29. Most participants had studied English in their native countries for an average of 6 years, but had only studied English in the United States for 1 year or less. These subjects were given the Idiom Recognition Test (IRT) where they were asked to orally define the meaning of 20 frequently used idioms selected from *A Dictionary of American Idioms*. These idioms included a sampling of Standard English (*to see eye to eye*), informal or colloquial idioms (*to be up the creek without a paddle*), and slang (*to get sacked*). The researcher did provide sentences using the idioms to provide context for the phrases.

Not only did the subject need to define the idiom, but they also participated in think-aloud protocols allowing Cooper insight into their thought processes as they derived meaning for the idioms. Subjects received detailed instructions about how to complete the think aloud protocol along with a list of examples of the things they may talk about while thinking about an idiom. Researchers then transcribed the protocols and broke them into T-units, “the shortest units which it is grammatically allowable to punctuate as sentences” (p. 242) for analysis. The analysis comprised of two parts. Part one included whether the subject correctly defined the idiom. On a scale of 1 to 3 the subject’s response was graded with 3 points given for correct responses, 2 for a partially correct response, and 1 for “I don’t know.” or an incorrect response. In the next phase each T-unit was analyzed for comprehension strategies used to derive meaning of the idiom.

Cooper found that “participants indicated that a stumbling block in comprehension was often the lack of a clear and close relationship between the literal and figurative meanings in an idiom” (p. 244). The think aloud protocols further revealed that “in many cases, a participant who had gotten off on the wrong foot in defining the idiom seemed to find it almost impossible to get back on track, recover, and continue in pursuit of the correct definition” (p. 245). This suggests that when an idiom is unfamiliar and completely unrelated to literal interpretations, the ESL student is most vulnerable to miscomprehend meaning. Not surprisingly, results showed that idioms most frequently used in speech, translating easily from the L1 to L2, or correlating most closely to literal meanings were most often correctly defined.

In analysis of the T-units Cooper discovered that the strategy most used by participants was guessing from context and using a logical cause and effect inference to determine meaning. The next most used strategy was to discuss and analyze the idiom trying to use any background knowledge to support a logical meaning for the phrase. Finally, some participants simply used the literal meanings, looked up meanings, or tried paraphrasing the idiom to make meaning. Ultimately, Cooper recognized that a myriad of strategies needed to be employed for the subject to make meanings fit in context. Due to this finding he supports using a heuristic approach with ESL students, “[subjects] used a variety of strategies, and they were not afraid to experiment and search for meaning through trial and error” (p. 255). Therefore, classrooms should be a place where a variety of comprehension strategies are taught and supported with an environment that rewards the word adventurer on their odyssey to make meaning of a second language.

Drucker, M. J. (2003).What reading teachers should know about ESL learners. *The Reading*

*Teacher*. *57*, 22-30.

English Language Learners appear in schools across the United States each year and add diversity to the classrooms. However, these students struggle with acquiring English-language skills and then comprehending the text when they are able to read. In 2000, the foreign-born population of the United States was 31.1 million and the numbers are continuing to drastically grow today. There was an increase of 57% since 1990 and these numbers account for 11.1% of the total population. “Classrooms across the United States have English Language Learners (ELLs) who are learning to speak, read, and write in their new language” (p. 22). Many classroom teachers and reading specialists are not knowledgeable when it comes to teaching these students. About 3 million public school teachers were surveyed and 41% teach limited English proficient (LEP) students, but only 12.5% of those teachers have received more than eight hours of training.

The author points out some obstacles that make the reading process difficult for English Language Learners and suggests strategies that will help these students understand and gain the skills necessary for learning the English language. These strategies are able to support the students’ reading progress in several different areas.

The first factor is conversational versus academic proficiency. Several people believe that ELLs become fluent pretty fast. “But researchers have found that, although ELLs can develop peer-appropriate conversational skills in about two years, developing academic proficiency in English can take much longer” (p. 23). It can take an English language learner five to seven years to catch up with their native English classmates (Collier & Thomas, 1999; Cummins, 1989). Teachers can help students understand meaning with conversations by using body language, facial expressions, gestures, intonation, and other various cues. Previewing the text by capturing the reader’s attention, relating the passage to something familiar, asking discussion questions, and giving an overview of what is about to be read all provide context and comprehensible input for the students before they read.

Orthography and phonology can also complicate the reading process for English Language Learners. “Reading is the phonological decoding of written text, and written text is the representation of sounds heard when language is spoken” (p. 24). The English language can be confusing because many words do not match their sound. Shared reading is an activity suggested to allow students to hear the language while they follow along with the teacher who is reading. Pair reading is also recommended to help ELLs read more fluently and accurately. Providing books with corresponding audiotapes helps the students hear the sounds and see the graphic representation.

Cultural differences and schema is another factor. “Schema theory holds that comprehending a text involves an interaction between the reader’s background knowledge and the text itself” (Carrell & Eisterhold, 1983). ELLs sometimes have trouble comprehending information because they lack the knowledge about specific cultural information. The author suggests incorporating literature that relates to the cultural backgrounds of all the students in the classroom. When selecting quality books, the teacher should follow these suggestions: “books should be accurate and contain current information, books should not reinforce stereotypes, but rather they should reflect the experiences of individuals, illustrations should realistically depict individuals of different ethnicities, and stories should be appealing” (Shioshita, 1997). The Language Experience Approach (LEA) helps students understand what they have read by allowing them to share a story of an experience they have had. Another recommendation is that the teacher and student can work together to comprehend the text and produce writing through interactive writing.

Vocabulary is a factor that is essential to the reading process. Researchers reported that students between 3rd and 12th grade learn up to 3,000 words each year (W. Nagy & P. Herman 1998). English Language Learners may be able to complete the vocabulary exercises, but struggle with applying the information in context. Teachers should have their students write the definitions in the margins or list synonyms for words that cause confusion. One researcher found a unique way for students to improve their vocabulary. “She found that elementary school children (kindergarten through grade 5) who engaged in singing as a form of language rehearsal, paired with sign language, improved on receptive identification of targeted vocabulary” (Schunk, 1999). This approach is an example of total physical response (TPR) and is “built around the coordination of speech and action; it attempts to teach language through physical (motor) activity” (Richards & Rodgers, 1998). Playing Simon Says or acting out the “Itsy Bitsy Spider” are other examples. Narrow reading is another suggestion where students learn about the same topic through a bunch of different books and resources. This exposes the students to a common collection of vocabulary. Read alouds also help support vocabulary development and promote reading.

These different approaches assure teachers that there are strategies to help the English Language Learners in your classroom as well as the native English speakers. Since it takes a long time for ELLs to develop necessary skills for the English language, researchers recommend that teachers allow students to use their native language. Just by picking the appropriate and exciting texts, teachers have the opportunity to inspire their students to be lifelong readers! As Eskey wrote, “people learn to read, and to read better, by reading” (2002).

Fitzgerald, J. (1993). Literacy and students who are learning English as a second language. *The*

*Reading Teacher, 46,* 638-647.

Fitzgerald presents an overview synthesizing the best information research offers for teachers of English-as-a-second-language (ESL) learners. Her review includes defining how instruction has changed in classrooms over time (or not changed) as well as highlighting practices known to be helpful for ESL students.

A recurring theme in Fitzgerald’s work revolves around *how* ESL students process and acquire better reading and writing skills. She continues to stress that ESL learners process and acquire competencies just as any other student – through immersion in good (and interesting) text including opportunities to write and discuss that same text. At the same time, she emphasizes that teachers should be aware ESL students must work harder to process the unfamiliar language than native speakers. Also, background and cultural information gaps may exist in their schematic understanding of some topics that the teacher may need to explain.

Fitzgerald begins her article by outlining statistics pointing to the need for teacher awareness about ESL issues. “In our nation’s largest school districts, currently about 1 out of every 3 students may be a language-minority student” (p. 639). She sites other compelling evidence such as population comparisons from 1980-1990 which show the Asian/Pacific Islander population increasing by 107.8% and Hispanic populations increasing by 53% nationwide. In some areas such as California and Texas, a teacher may be faced with large instances of ESL students representing diverse cultures and languages. Although not as concentrated all parts of the United States, all teachers will have experience with ESL students before the close of their teaching career. This article suggests research-based strategies to best instruct these children.

Fitzgerald sites statistics indicating the “lagging literacy achievement” (p. 639) of ESL learners as a wake up call for educators. ESL students cannot be ignored and/or underserved or they will not progress as learners and, Fitzgerald adds, these students are ensured the right of an education in this country. She outlines the type of ESL instruction typically offered in schools although, “No one type of approach has been found to be most effective” (p. 640). Program types include pull-out ESL programs, transitional bilingual, content ESL, and two-way bilingual. Pull-out ESL programs are most prevalent in areas with fewer ESL students and funding for ESL programs. These are small group classes where the ESL teacher (who may or may not be certified as an ESL teacher) provides instructional assistance for varying amounts of time per week (depending upon local LEA determination), usually not in the ESL student’s native language. Where larger groups of ESL students live, there may be programs providing instruction in the learner’s native language such as transitional bilingual or offering instruction in the content subjects for two to three years in the student’s native language, or they may nurture competency in both English and the ESL student’s native language such as two-way bilingual programs do.

Understanding that the ESL student’s task of processing literacy in a new language is taxing and “arduous” and accepting that background knowledge may be shady to non-existent in spots for these students is the first step toward “exemplary practices” (p. 640) according to Fitzgerald. She also outlines the following as best practices for ESL learners. “Students who work in an environment where they believe the target language group appears supportive of their learning the target language tend to make greater gains in proficiency than others” (p. 641). In other words, when an ESL student feels wanted, accepted, and encouraged by the teacher (and the learning environment a teacher creates), they are more motivated to make gains in learning English. Fitzgerald stresses that the classroom teacher can increase this productive climate by showing respect and interest in other cultures, specifically cultures native to the ESL learner, and by appreciating the difficulties faced by those trying to learn another language for schooling.

For all readers, in particular struggling readers, activating prior knowledge is an important strategy for comprehension. For the ESL student, this practice is vital for other reasons as well. One cannot assume that all western customs are known and appreciated throughout the world. Therefore, careful thought and preparation for what information needs to be shared during this time benefits the teacher and students. Fitzgerald suggests that a cultural exchange, of sorts, may transpire during this period with ESL students sharing their wedding traditions, for instance, versus those typical here in North America.

One of the biggest challenges for teachers may come from the ESL student’s home rather than the student themselves. Fitzgerald reminds teachers not to assume that ESL parents expect or understand the same type of schooling traditionally offered in America. “Incongruencies in expectations, values, views, or beliefs between home and school and powerfully affect student learning” (p. 641). She even gives an example of incongruencies of expectations with language notwithstanding, “parents with low literacy levels may thing methods akin to ‘skill and drill’ are the most appropriate ones to use,” and “some black parents may most appreciate teachers who focus on basics and are directive,” (p. 641) revealing that already within our melting pot there are diverse opinions describing best practice schooling. Therefore, teachers must remember that ESL parents “may not understand or support teachers’ use of other methods [than what they expected]” (p. 641).

Likewise, North American schooling may defy the expectations and customs of the ESL teacher themselves. Fitzgerald gives the example of Hispanic students who are accustomed to “small talk” before any community business who find our “down to business” attitude in schooling foreign and discouraging. She also offers a custom from Hawaiian children of “contrapuntal conversation” where narrators are aided and joined by the participants. This sort of behavior would be seen as rude and interrupting in the traditional classroom, but without it Hawaiian children would feel disengaged and unappreciated.

Fitzgerald does offer best practice solutions to these concerns. Of course the best defense is a good offense, in this case, that means being aware of the possibility of incongruencies and recognizing them for clarification if they do arise. I like that Fitzgerald does acknowledge, “Often it is impossible to determine exactly what is incongruent” (p. 642). However, she continues that other times simple modifications can benefit not only the ESL student, but other struggling readers as well. For teachers of younger children, she suggests observing their play to see if there are cultural values or traditions causing incongruency with schooling. “Where cultural incongruity determinations can be made and where classroom modifications are reasonable, the modifications would likely effect greater student learning” (p. 642). Furthermore, simply by explicitly explaining class expectations, routines, and interactions, teachers may prevent incongruencies before they begin as suggested by Delpit (1988).

Clearly, the more teachers can communicate with parents, the less likely incongruencies between home and school will occur. Fitzgerald suggests classroom group or individual meetings to show student work and expectations, home visits to share student portfolios, or open classrooms for drop in visits to observe classroom routines. While acknowledging that language barriers are often harder to breech with parents than ESL students, Fitzgerald makes the following wise observation, “even when entire families do not speak any English, teacher’s efforts to reach out, to be open, and to be available are often understood and appreciated” (p. 643).

Finally, Fitzgerald addresses how to teach and “immerse” ESL students in literacy activities to foster development in the target language. She begins discussion by directly challenging traditional belief and practice where orality and literacy are separate with speaking and listening skills taught first, and then when some level of proficiency is reached the student moves to reading and writing. Fitzgerald states, “Few individuals would dispute the view that reading, writing, listening, and speaking are interrelated” (p. 643). Therefore, common sense and research shows that the most powerful learning for all children, ESL students included, combine an “interrelatedness of the four modes of language” (p. 644). By being exposed to good and interesting literature and given purposeful opportunities to speak and write about these pieces of literature, the ESL student gains competency just as any other student.

Fitzgerald does caution that research reveals successful teachers focus on the “big things first.” In other words, when an ESL student writes regarding literature, the teacher considers the students level of competency and decides what the “big things” are: content only or grammar, conventions, and content. A teacher wants to cultivate learning, not discourage students with red marks. This leads to Fitzgerald’s final suggestion to cultivate a room for risk. The ESL student must feel secure to try without teasing or censure or they will not try at all. Who would?

Fitzgerald offers a literature overview of best practices for ESL students. Most of these practices could be applicable regardless of class size and fairly easy to implement. Most importantly, not any of the suggestions would be detrimental or robbing other learners in the class, rather, these suggestions would benefit other struggling readers and writers as well.

Fitzgerald, J. & Graves, M. F. (2004, December, 2005, January). Reading supports for all.

*Educational Leadership*, 68-71.

Today’s classroom requires that teachers have strategies to assist second-language learners in reading comprehension. “A scaffolded reading experience (SRE) is a flexible framework for teaching lessons involving texts” (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004). The support that scaffolding offers can be used in any content-area classroom and for any grade level. SRE consists of pre-reading, during-reading, post-reading activities that lend support through a framework that can be removed as the student gains confidence and the capability to perform the task independently (p. 68).

Scaffolding is successful only if it is a temporary support, but also, it must place the student in their zone of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, it “supports students through tasks that they could quite manage independently (p. 69). Examples of this include building background knowledge and vocabulary for unfamiliar subjects. The key is transferring more and more of the responsibility to the student. Pre-teaching the vocabulary eventually goes to giving the students a glossary of words (p. 69). Another example of a scaffolding technique is reducing the number of questions for the ELL student and translation (for those who are literate in Spanish) of some of the questions into Spanish.

English language learners are going through additional cognitive processes as they are translating along with all the processes involved in reading comprehension. These students rely on relationships their native language has to the second language. These relationships and skills vary according to the literacy of the student and include phonological awareness, cognate words, and other selected cognitive processes. (Fitzgerald, 1995). On the other hand, word order of sentences varies greatly between languages and requires second language learners to acquire a new understanding of syntax along with a new cultural understanding.

Complex reading tasks must be broken down into chunks in order to ease the mental demands that are already so high for ELL students. “Teachers can use SREs to ‘slice’ student goals and assignments to help tailor lesson to English language learners’ abilities and needs” (p.70). While the class is assigned to gather the most important points of a chapter, the English language learner may be assigned to determine the main idea. Pre-reading activities to motivate and establish vocabulary are conducted for the entire class. Pairing ELL students with stronger English speaking readers and assigning each of them a task that reveals their understanding with a different product provides another scaffolding technique (p. 71).

The use of the wide variety of scaffolding strategies reviewed in this article helps ensure that English language learners have the support they need to improve their reading comprehension and become confident, successful students.

Hickman, P. Pollard-Durodola, S. &Vaughn, S (2004). Storybook reading: Improving

vocabulary and comprehension for English-language learners. The Reading Teacher. 57,

720-30.

Storybook reading is a strategy that can successfully introduce students to new vocabulary and build their comprehension skills as well. Throughout the last several years, research has been focused on improving instruction for struggling readers. Yet nothing was mentioned on how to apply teacher read-alouds as an effective practice for enhancing vocabulary and comprehension. “English-language learners are one of the largest groups of students who struggle with literacy in general and vocabulary and comprehension in particular” (p. 720). Researchers believe that instruction needs to be implemented to meet the social language needs of English-language learners, but also the academic, cognitive, and language development that is essential in order for students to succeed in school.

“A student’s level of vocabulary knowledge has been shown to be an important predictor of reading ability (fluency) and reading comprehension for English-language learners” (Grabe, 1991; McLaughlin, 1987). Practices mentioned in the literature for supporting development for ELLs include: “activating and drawing upon students’ background knowledge in relation to story content to support comprehension and vocabulary retention, integrating the teaching of word meanings with the content area and context in which they will be used, addressing basic vocabulary that is difficult to visualize as well as vocabulary that is rich and evocative, thereby increasing student challenge and engagement with words, providing guided discussions with students and encouraging higher level, elaborated responses with regard to vocabulary, structure, and use, and using culturally relevant texts as well as those that incorporate aspects of students’ life experiences to draw upon prior knowledge to promote comprehension and retention of text concepts and new vocabulary” (p. 721).

Read-alouds should last about 20 to 30 minutes a day and should focus on vocabulary and comprehension. The reason for this article was to describe a teacher read-aloud practice designed specifically to address and promote vocabulary and comprehension skill development for first-grade English language learners with reading difficulties. The purpose for read-alouds is for the teacher “to assist students in building and extending vocabulary and content knowledge, as well as expanding their skills in listening comprehension and oral expression” (p. 722). Teachers read a book over three to five days and separated the book into passages of 200-250 words. The entire story is reread and discussed the day after the last passage is read and the vocabulary words are reviewed. When the teacher separates the text into smaller passages, she is able to select a few vocabulary words, define them, and relate the words to the content in the story.

When choosing vocabulary words, teachers should pick Tier 2 words. Tier 2 words can be used across the content and can be defined and associated with words already known to the students. Tier 2 words are normally descriptive and effective in building the language development of all learners. “Using terms with which the student is already acquainted to give meaning to new words enables students to associate the new vocabulary with their daily experiences, generalizing it across contexts” (p. 722). The teacher creates definitions for the vocabulary words and makes sure the definitions use familiar words that the students will be able to understand.

There are five different steps to follow when incorporating a read-aloud in the classroom. The first step is to introduce the story, have the students make predictions, and teach three new vocabulary words that students will hear and be listening for in the story. The second step is to read a passage from a narrative or informational text out loud. Then the teacher guides students in discussion where oral language is spoken by the ELLs. Rereading the passage and reviewing a few vocabulary words is the third step. While rereading the entire story, when a vocabulary word is mentioned, students give their own definition. Then the students write a sentence using the vocabulary word. Extending comprehension is next and summarizing what was read is the last step. Students relate the story with their own personal experiences and share their thoughts with each other. The teacher summarizes what was learned by reviewing the name and author of the story, the main events and ideas, and the new vocabulary words.

“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 the text” (p. 728). Read alouds get the class actively engaged while learning new vocabulary words and building comprehension. The storybook strategy with read alouds promotes oral language development and listening comprehension.

Klinger, J. K. & Vaughn, S. (1996). Reciprocal teaching of reading comprehension

strategies for students with learning disabilities who use English as a second

language. *The Elementary School Journal, 96,* 275-293.

The researchers begin by stating the staggering statistic of nearly one million students labeled as both English as a second language (ESL) and learning disabled (LD) in the United States school system. Obviously, an ESL student already experiences more problems with comprehension than a native speaker since they often lack the background knowledge, decoding skills, or academic schemata to aid them with reading. As a result, “ESL students with LD typically have been placed in programs that stress activities related to word identification and literal comprehension rather than the development of comprehension strategies” (p. 276); in other words, teaching story content is emphasized more than teaching comprehension strategy use. Klinger and Vaughn speculated that if LD ESL students learned comprehension strategies they could experience the same benefits other researchers had shown to be effective with general populations (Palincsar & Brown, 1984; Casanave, 1988; Hernandez, 1991; Miller & Perkins, 1989; O’Malley & Chamot, 1990).

Klinger and Vaughn were specifically interested in Palincsar and Brown’s model of reciprocal teaching. Various studies demonstrated the effectiveness of the reciprocal teaching model with students “who can decode but have difficulty comprehending text” (p. 276). The researchers felt that characteristic described many of the ESL LD population they wanted to help. Reciprocal teaching emphasizes use of the comprehension skills good readers naturally do: predicting, summarizing, clarifying, and question generation. For struggling readers these skills do not always occur naturally, so the teacher models these strategies by demonstrating during “think aloud” readings then discusses the reading with the students. The teacher continues to model “think aloud” readings explicitly explaining which strategy they are using and why until the students demonstrate proficiency using the strategies themselves. As the students’ capabilities increase, the teacher relinquishes the role of “teacher” to students and becomes more of a facilitator. “Reciprocal teaching recognizes that cognitive development occurs when concepts first learned through social interactions become internalized and made one’s own. Thus… students, with the assistance of the teacher and/or more knowledgeable peers, become increasingly proficient at applying comprehension strategies” (p. 276). Recognizing that the reciprocal teaching model had already been shown effective with “adequate” decoders but poor comprehenders, the researchers wanted to know if it would also prove successful with readers showing deficits in both areas. Furthermore, they wanted to study if students would continue to employ strategies learned with reciprocal teaching even if the teacher was not present. Therefore, as a second phase of their study Klinger and Brown “included cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning groups as a means to enhance strategic learning following teacher-facilitated strategy instruction” (p. 277).

Klinger and Brown included cross-age tutoring as several studies (Cohen, Kulik, & Kulik, 1982; Goodlad & Hirst, 1989; Scruggs & Richter, 1988) found it “to benefit both tutors and tutees” (p. 277) academically and socially. In this study, the researchers paired older students with younger students to teach and enhance the comprehension strategies of the tutee. Likewise, “cooperative learning methods have sometimes produced favorable results for students with LD (Madden & Slavin, 1983; Stevens, Madden, Slavin, & Farnish, 1987) and for ESL students (Kagan, 1986; Long & Porter, 1985)” (p. 277). In these groups students were given opportunities to read and discuss text using strategies learned from reciprocal teaching lessons. “The key to academic and cognitive growth appears to be how well the learning environment is structured to promote improved performance – just placing students together and telling them to cooperate is not enough” (p. 277). So the purpose of this study became three-fold: (1) Would the reciprocal teaching model be effective with a population where both decoding and comprehension skills were lacking? (2) Could/would students demonstrate strategies taught during reciprocal teaching lessons without the presence of a teacher? (3) Would cross-age tutoring or cooperative learning be an effective activity for students to use comprehension strategies learned through reciprocal teaching?

Subjects came from an urban middle school where the majorities (89%) of students were Hispanic. Researchers received 26 permission slips to participate back of seventh and eighth graders at the school fitting their target population. In order to be considered for the study, a student had to be classified as ESL and LD shown to be at least two grade levels behind on the Woodcock-Johnson Tests of Achievement Passage Comprehension Subtests. Researchers used the social studies classroom as the context for this study where the content was delivered in English and English textbooks were used. After the initial first fifteen days of instruction regarding reciprocal teaching, the group of 26 was randomly divided in half and assigned to either the cross-age tutoring or the cooperative learning groups.

As stated above, for the first 15 days, all 26 subjects received the same instruction in their social studies classroom for 40 minutes a day. They were taught six comprehension strategies by Klinger placed in groups of six or seven to practice. These six strategies were explicitly taught and modeled: predicting what will happen, activating prior knowledge, clarifying unfamiliar words or phrases, highlighting the main idea of a paragraph, summarizing both main ideas and important supporting details, and asking/answering questions about the text during reading. Klinger modeled the whole process during “think aloud” sessions for the first few days gradually scaffolding instruction to give more control to students and by the tenth day simply facilitated the groups while students practiced reciprocal teaching. It should be noted that all instruction and text was in English, but students did use Spanish to clarify for each other occasionally. For the last 12 days of the study, subjects split into two groups of 13 and assigned into the cross-age tutoring group or the cooperative learning group. In the cross-age tutoring group, seventh or eighth graders tutored sixth graders for 30-40 minutes a day teaching the tutee the same strategies they learned in reciprocal teaching. For the cooperative learning group, the subjects split into groups of four or five for the same amount of time and used the reciprocal teaching strategies, but with no teacher to facilitate their discussion. Teachers were visible to monitor behavior, but not to facilitate any of the groups.

Researchers used multiple measures for this study. Most significant and telling were the achievement tests and researcher developed strategy interviews administered pre and post intervention and the reading comprehension tests given twice before the interventions, once weekly during the intervention, and twice again after the intervention. Comprehension tests were scored to show the percentage right. Interviews were scored by an outside researcher using a two-way analysis of variance. Klinger and Brown looked for changes in both scores and attitudes.

Subjects showed significant growth during the whole study. “For both groups, actual increases in comprehension were greatest during the reciprocal teaching phase that included intensive input from the researcher” (p. 282). Researchers found that reciprocal teaching did help students who struggled with both decoding and comprehension, but was far more successful if the student had an initial ability to read or speak the second language. Still, the study demonstrated that a broad range of students benefit from reciprocal teaching, students did continue to use reciprocal teaching strategies without a teacher presents, and that both cross-age tutoring and cooperative learning provided effective opportunities to implement reciprocal teaching for students.

Kooy, M, & Chiu, A (1998). Language, literature, and learning in the ESL classroom. *English*

*Journal*. *88*, 78-84.

This article describes a way to capture English-language learners’ attention by engaging them across multicultural literature and incorporating stories that they can personally relate to. Both authors have experience teaching ELLs and relate to their students in a personal way. The primary author, Mary Kooy, is a Dutch Canadian immigrant and the other author, Annette Chiu, is a first generation Chinese Canadian. They both have personally struggled with culture and language and wanted to form a secure basis for selecting texts and creating strategies for engaging students of diverse cultures with literature.

Chiu taught English to Hong Kong students and struggled trying to teach the material the students needed to know for the end of year test while keeping her students engaged in learning at the same time. Since none of the course’s texts described stories of Hong Kong youth, the teacher felt like her students were unable to connect to the characters or the text. Kooy believed that literature is a place where language and meaning meet to help ELLs connect and relate to the text. Literature across various genres exposes students to a variety of cultures as well. “Literature gives evidence of the widest variety of syntax, the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination. It provides examples of the language employed at its most effective, subtle, and suggestive. As literature sets out the potential of the English language it serves as an encouragement, guide, target to the presently limited linguistic achievement of the foreign student” (Povey, 1979). Literature gives English language learners an opportunity to grasp an understanding of what they read and connect to the text in their own personal way.

Instead of following the typical pattern of teaching language first, the authors propose to begin with literature and from the literature experiences, move into and incorporate language study. By bringing interesting texts into the classroom, students are constantly engaged in the reading. “Such texts meaningfully trace the worlds, events, lives, and experiences of others” (p. 80). With literature, the students learn from several different texts and are able to compare these stories to their own. “When students recognize and bring their own experience to a text, the focus shifts away from a lack of English language proficiency (deficit) to knowledgeable individuals with unique ancestries and experiences” (Ende and Kocmarek 1990). Students are able to discuss their similarities with the text and are not worried about perfecting their English language skills at that moment. By engaging students in the works across several genres of literature, students have the opportunity to reshape their understanding of “culture”. “Each text offers a glimpse, and the more glimpses we offer, the bigger and richer the picture becomes” (p. 81). If English language learners are exposed to a rich assortment of literature, their own personal connections to the text forms the comprehension skills needed to learn a second language.

By teaching a wide assortment of texts, students experience a variety of stories through different writer’s perspectives and develop a new appreciation for reading and learning. Picture books are often left out in the upper grades and the illustrations help English language learners interpret the text. They “offer accessible and powerful entries into whole texts supported by visual representations as varied as the texts themselves” (p. 81). The pictures in a story help ELLs gain meaning from the text and create a topic for discussion. Drama, Short Stories, Novels, and Poetry also help English language learners grasp information from a text in different ways. The exposure to an assortment of genres informs the students and enhances discussion while developing a cultural understanding.

Read alouds open up the possibility for students to hear the language and imagine the description by listening to the text come to life. Discussion activities give students the chance to talk with their classmates about what they have read and they are able to express their thoughts and connections as well. Many ELLs are scared to speak out in class for fear of making mistakes. The authors suggest providing a place for students to express their thinking in a writing journal or reading log. “As readings progress, logs become a scrapbook of learning, a concrete record of their ongoing journeys through and with texts” (p. 83). It is important for the teacher to collect the journals and make comments or “talk” with their students in the margins. This forms a relationship where the teacher and student learn more about each other through a different perspective. Journals also help students gather their thoughts by writing them down before sharing their responses with their classmates. “The log accompanies the students throughout their reading experiences, it becomes their travel log” (p. 83). With the opportunity to put their thoughts onto paper, English language learners experience learning through literary conversations.

Discussion helps English language learners by moving the focus away from language deficiencies and participating in the knowledge to be shared instead. By incorporating discussion in the classroom, the students experience the text in new ways and form a solid understanding of what they have read. “Interactive discussions establish, link, and maintain an active community of readers that fosters membership into the literary community” (p. 84). By including literature across the genres, students gain an understanding of the English language and experience several diverse texts which represent a broad range of cultures.

McLaughlin, B., August, D., Snow, C. U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Research and Improvement, National Library of Education, Educational Resources Information Center. (2000). *Vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension in English language learners: Final performance report* (pp 2-46 Report # FL 025 932). Washington D.C.: Office of Educational Research and Improvement.

McLaughlin, August, and Snow (2000) conducted a three-year longitudinal study to explore vocabulary knowledge of English language learners (ELLs), compare that knowledge to English-only speakers (EOs), and to develop, implement, and test the effectiveness of an intervention program.

This study was implemented because very little research had been conducted on the vocabulary development of ELLs. This study was the first to compare native and non-native English speakers and to develop and evaluate vocabulary intervention strategies. Also, prior to this study, no research had been done on the vocabulary growth of ELLs in the United States.

Research shows that learning a second language is difficult, especially learning the academic language necessary to succeed (McLaughlin, 1993). Also, knowledge of vocabulary is especially crucial to the process of learning to read for ELLs. Anderson and Nagy (1992) showed a strong relationship “between knowledge of word meaning and ability to comprehend passages containing those words” (p. 7). Other research shows that vocabulary knowledge is especially important for the academic success of ELLs. Verhallen and Schoonen (1993) conducted a study on vocabulary depth and concluded that not only do ELLs lack vocabulary knowledge in terms of words known, but also in terms of their range of meaning aspects (i.e. multiple meanings). Simply looking up words and defining them isn’t enough interaction with the words to learn them (Stahl and Fairbanks, 1986). Instead, as Anderson and Nagy (1992) argue, there needs to be “teacher-assisted engagement with words” (p. 10).

McLaughlin, August, and Snow (2000) looked at both breadth and depth of word knowledge over a three-year period. In the first year, a cross-sectional study of twenty four fourth and fifth grade classes at three schools across three states was conducted. All ELLs were Spanish speakers, and there was an approximately even number of EO students and ELLs. One group received intervention and one did not. The second and third years show how vocabulary developed over the period and the effects of the vocabulary intervention.

During the first year, the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) was given in English to all students. Then, the Spanish PPVT was given to ELLs, resulting in evidence that there doesn’t seem to be a relationship between vocabulary knowledge in L1 and L2. The results showed a large vocabulary gap between each group (EOs and ELLs) across sites. A second test given later in the year showed that the gap remained. A naming task also measured the breadth of vocabulary knowledge and showed a significant gap between EOs and ELLs. Two assessments measured breadth of vocabulary knowledge: a multiple meanings task and a sentence judgment task. Both showed ELLs lagging significantly compared to their EO peers. In year one, the testing results also showed that vocabulary understanding was much more important to ELLs than to EOs.

In year two, the intervention program was implemented. This plan used twelve high-frequency, content-based words a week and taught a variety of strategies to help a student access the meaning of a word. These strategies involve the teaching of roots, affixes, cognates, and strategies for monitoring comprehension. Teachers were to use vocabulary in all content areas. The second year text was *Fables,* and the weeks were structured so that the first day, the text was introduced to ELLs in Spanish and EOs in English and target vocabulary words were taught. On day two, they worked on inference strategies; on day three, contexting activities were implemented; on day four, word activities were practiced, and on day five, enhancing knowledge of the word was continued. These strategies were implemented for two six weeks. The sixth and twelfth week was used to review words. Teachers spent from fifteen to thirty minutes daily on vocabulary. Some activities implemented were charades, word guess, twenty questions, and word sorts. The strategies involved inferring meaning, using roots, deep processing, word play, understanding polysemy, and using cognates.

At the end of the second year, the difference between those who received intervention and those who didn’t was compared. The students who received intervention learned the target vocabulary better. The ELLs gained more word knowledge if in the intervention, but the same wasn’t true for EO students. No significant impact was made through vocabulary instruction (or none) on reading comprehension as measured by the CLOZE test, leading the researchers to the conclusion that a year is not a sufficient amount of time for a non-native student to make vocabulary gains that will impact comprehension.

In the third year, the study ran into some problems and McLaughlin, August, and Snow were unable to follow all of the same students. Thus, only sixty three students (34 ELL and 29 EO) received the vocabulary intervention for two years. In this year of implementation, a theme of immigration was studied in a variety of genres. Again, as in year two, target vocabulary was chosen and learned using multiple strategies to decode meaning.

In the spring of the third year, the PPVT showed that students in the intervention scored higher than those not, especially ELLs. ELLs in intervention did better on reading comprehension, as well. Students in the intervention for two years did better than those not. ELLs in the program for two years who received intervention scored better on multiple meanings than other students. Depth of word knowledge also improved for ELLs. For EOs, multiple meanings and word knowledge depth did not show statistically significant improvement. The results of the test indicate that the intervention did much to close the vocabulary gap.

Aside from analyzing data, McLaughlin, August, and Snow did a case study analysis for twelve fifth graders from Santa Cruz, CA. Eight of these students were bilingual (English and Spanish), four were monolingual, half were in the intervention group, half were in the control group, six were girls, six were boys, and half had high vocabulary knowledge, half average vocabulary knowledge.

This portion of the study was used to see if ELLs used the same strategies for inferring vocabulary meaning and for reading comprehension as native English speakers. The students were given eighteen passages with eighteen targeted words. They were recorded as they did think-alouds to derive meaning. Four strategies were targeted: contexting, cognate knowledge, morpheme analysis, and knowledge of multiple meanings. For cognate usage, the data shows that, “a.) knowledge of cognate relationships is an effective strategy for inferring meaning for Latinate, infrequent, academic English words and b.) Spanish-speaking ELLs are more likely to use this knowledge if the strategy has been made explicit to them and demonstrated for them…” (p. 41). Members of the intervention group were more likely to accurately use morphological analysis of a word. Students in the intervention were more likely to reject a more common meaning of the target word and return back to the context to infer meaning, showing knowledge of polysemous words and their functions.

This three year study shows that a year of vocabulary intervention is not enough and that non-native speakers can make gains in vocabulary and reading comprehension if they get systematic, effective instruction.

Meltzer, Julie, & Hamann, Edmund T. (2006). Literacy for English learners and regular students,

too. *The Education Digest*. *April*, 32-40.

This article is the condensed version of a lengthier work published in the Journal Principal Leadership, 6 (February 2006). It is an examination of methods of preparing content area teachers to address the needs of ELL students in the mainstream classroom through methods that are beneficial to their English-speaking peers as well.

A major concern for teachers and students alike is the growing number of students in every American classroom being instructed by teachers who are most likely not prepared to address their ESL needs. “A recent study found that 1.3 million teachers (43% of all teachers) have at least one ELL enrolled in their classes. Add to this that all teachers must play a role in bringing students; content-area reading, writing, and thinking skills—in English—up to speed, whether they are monolingual, bilingual, or trilingual speakers” (p.33). In addition to attending workshops and in-services in order to keep up to date on content area material, they are in need of training in strategies to meet the needs of these ELL students in the mainstream classroom. The following information is compilation of ideas that not only improve instruction for ELL students, but of their English-speaking peers as well.

“Over the past two years, researchers at the Education Alliance/Lab at Brown University and the Center for Resource Management have been examining how the research on adolescent literacy matches up with that on effective content-area instruction for ELLs at the middle-and high-school levels” (p.33). There are three main teaching practices that are identified as vital to the success of any classroom. These three practices are discussed with emphasis on how they can be adapted to reach the ELL learner.

Students need learning experiences that engage them with authentic, motivating tasks. To entice students into being enthusiastic learners, they must feel safe and accepted in the classroom environment. All students must take part in the activities, and they must be authentic, having a practical application to which the student relates. Creating websites, studying pollution of a local stream and presenting it to an environmental panel, job shadowing are a few examples. “In general, clear expectations, responsiveness to student interests and concerns, a variety of print materials in the classrooms, and a discussion format that deliberately makes time for people to ‘think-pair-share’ or practice responses are helpful for ELLs and other students” (p.35).

Teacher modeling such as think-alouds, more reading and writing across the curriculum, explicit instruction and guided practice, should be followed up with frequent formative assessments. Content knowledge should be checked in multiple ways. Using drawings to illustrate the ideas in the writing is one such assessment strategy. Instructional scaffolding when necessary gives bilinguals the opportunity to perform with the same rate of success as their monolingual peers (p.36). Flexible grouping should be practiced allowing for academic language practice.

In tackling reading and writing, all students benefit from understanding content-area discourse, text structure, and content vocabulary. They need instruction in the discourse within in the content-area discipline. Teachers must explain and model the difference between personal narrative and scientific writing, for example. This includes focused, repeated exposure to key terminology and academic vocabulary. “In many cases, these practices can build on ELLs’ existing vocabulary because many English scientific terms share cognates with French, Spanish, and other Latin-derived languages” (p.37-38).

Teachers across the content-areas should meet with ESL instructors to share ideas and strategies to improve instruction of ELLs. Literacy workshops should be held throughout the year with all teachers assisting them in how to implement strategies discussed in every classroom. Teacher study groups which work with various literacy resource texts, “such as Tovani’s *I read it But I Don’t Get It* or Wilhelm’s *Think Aloud Strategies*” (p.39) are encouraged for teachers to develop strategies for ELLs.

The goal of this instructional article is to demonstrate how general training for effective classroom instruction can be adapted for effective ELL teaching as well. “Adolescent ELLs do not have the luxury of time to first become fluent in English and then attend to science, math, and history classes before they graduate” (p.40). Teaching must meet the needs of all students, including the growing second-language learner population. This is essential for a successful, educated America.

Palmer, B.C., Shackelford, V.S., Miller, S.C., & Leclere, J.T. (2007). Bridging two worlds:

Reading comprehension, figurative language instruction, and the English-language

learner. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, *50*, 258-267.

The demographics of American schools are shifting. Waggoner (1999) reported that “one in six U.S. adolescents aged 14-19 either spoke a language other than English at home, was born in a foreign country, or both” (p. 258). Thus, reading teachers need to be especially attentive to the needs of English Language Learners (ELL). Research also indicates that a special need in language learning for these students is in the area of figurative language (Lazar, Warr-Leeper, Nicholson, Johnson, 1989). Not only do Americans, teachers included, sprinkle idioms throughout their natural speech, but figurative language also occurs with high frequency in written texts. If an ELL doesn’t have the skills to access this type of language, then, as Palmer and Brooks (2004) note, their “inability to interpret figurative language leads to a breakdown in text comprehension” (p. 259). Therefore, being able to understand figurative language is essential to the ELL for both academic and social purposes. Cummins (1986, 1989) states that students’ learning in a second language is interdependent on their learning in a first language; therefore the native language need not be abandoned but becomes a useful tool in second language acquisition.

Palmer, Shackelford, Miller, and Leclere’s (2007) main objective with this case study was to search out and implement the best methods for teaching figurative language to ELLs in an effort to aid listening and reading comprehension. The subject of the study was Alejandro, a Spanish-speaking junior high school student. Alejandro was born in Los Angeles after his parents moved to the city to escape civil fighting in Central America. He is the youngest boy and the middle child of five and did not begin to learn English until he started kindergarten at the age of six. At ten, he and his family returned to El Salvador, hoping to escape the gang violence of L.A. At the age of eleven, he returned to the United States, this time to Florida. While he was gone, his minimal English skills grew rusty, and he felt even more inadequate as an English speaker. Alejandro served in his family as a “language broker” (McQuillian, Tse, 1995) or a translator for his parents and was often absent to provide these services for his family.

After five months of weekly observations, the reading teacher described Alejandro as shy and reluctant to speak. She also said that, in his own words, he disliked reading and writing. He told the teacher that when speaking to native English speakers, he would just smile and nod if he didn’t understand something they were saying, and that often, what he did not understand was figurative sayings. He could understand literal texts when they were read aloud to him, but if he had to read a book silently without having heard it first, he would quickly grow frustrated and not be able to answer questions. As a result of these observations and conversations, Palmer, Shackleford, Miller, and Leclere posited that Alejandro’s misunderstanding figurative language led to academic and social comprehension problems.

Alejandro was given an assessment to measure his understanding of figurative language, The Figurative Language Interpretation Test (FLIT), an un-timed, fifty-item multiple choice test. His scores demonstrated his inability to interpret figurative language, especially idioms. Then, the researchers implemented a plan to teach Alejandro strategies for understanding figurative language. This plan was a mix of explicit instruction and scaffolding. The teacher modeled through a think-aloud how she determined the meanings of figurative language. This process was done with a variety of texts, and then Alejandro would practice the strategy of questioning to get meaning, with the teacher providing the questions at first.

The researchers adapted a three step process from Simmons and Palmer (1994) to interpret figurative language, and they added a fourth step to further assist the ELL. This process consists of finding the figurative language, trying its literal meaning, finding its intended meaning, and then applying the phrase to a real-life, personal situation (p. 262). Also, Alejandro was asked to draw pictures of the idioms’ literal and figurative meanings as well as their life applications. He was allowed and encouraged to use Spanish, his native language, as a medium for thinking about figurative language. Figurative language does not often transfer between two languages, so translations weren’t encouraged. Alejandro did bring in examples of figurative language in Spanish to share. He kept a figurative language notebook where he recorded the use of such language from conversations and worked out the meanings alone when possible and with the help of his teacher as necessary. He became metacognitively aware of when non-literal language was used, as self-reported in conferences with his teacher.

Alejandro received this instruction forty-five minutes a day for two months. After the strategies were taught and implemented, the post-test FLIT was given, showing improvement and an ability to discern figurative language. In a conference, Alejandro said that he was finding listening and reading comprehension to be easier as a result of these strategies. Also, the teacher observed that his confidence increased—he spoke loud enough to be heard in class when answering questions about reading passages.

Results show that the explicit instruction of figurative language and the four-step problem-solving process is effective for ELLs in aiding their language comprehension. The researchers further recommend the use of student-created tools in this process, like the drawings of the idioms. Also, results indicate that dialogue in context, modeling and independent practice, visualization, and the use of the native language were effective practices for Alejandro. But he is just one boy—will these strategies be effective across the board for ELLs? Much research needs to be done to answer that question.

Proctor, Patrick C., Carlo, Maria, August, Diane, & Snow, Catherine (2005). Native Spanish-

speaking children reading in English: toward a model of comprehension. *Journal of*

*Educational Psychology*, *97*, 246-256.

The research contained in this article was the effort of Proctor, Carlo, August, and Snow, in their attempt to develop a model for comprehension that could be used in guiding those instructing English-language learners. Their inspiration for conducting the study was based on several factors. “High school graduation is now a universal criterion for employability and is in many places denied to those who cannot pass high-stakes, linguistically complex tests” (p. 246). Knowing that it is vital that the same opportunity for quality instruction be available to second-language speakers as is for native English learners, these researchers found that very little had been done to establish a model for reading comprehension for second language (L2) students.

Most studies of this student population were aimed at “predict[ing] variation in comprehension by exploring sociocultural domains such as the roles of home and school literacy practices (Aarts & Verhoeven, 1999; Connor, 1983; Leseman & de Jong, 1998; Pucci & Ulanoff, 1998) and language attitudes and cultural background (Abu-Rabia, 1995, 1996, 1998; Beech & Keys, 1997; Droop & Verhoeven, 1998; Jimenez, 2000).” Research has also been carried out to help determine the “importance of L2 vocabulary acquisition for L2 reading comprehension (Coady, 1997; Laufer, 1997, 2001; Nation, 2001) (p. 246). Proctor and his associates felt that a base study to determine the model for reading comprehension was vital in order to have a standard of comparison as further reading research is conducted (p. 247).

In order to have the information gained from this study more accurately reflect the situations typically faced in U.S. classrooms, the researchers decided to focus only on L2 knowledge of students. Literacy in their first language varies greatly with students and cannot be assumed. Many ELL students’ first formal educational experience is in English, and they are, and essentially remain, illiterate in their native language. Transfer of knowledge of literacy skills into the new language is quite often absent and “current political trends away from bilingual education are making it decreasingly likely that the native language of ELLs will not be developed to levels sufficient to support transfer” (p.247).

Current research has identified processes that contribute to reading comprehension in native English speakers. Oral language competence, vocabulary knowledge and phonological awareness, listening comprehension, and decoding skills, have all been found to impact successful reading comprehension. The limited research in existence seems to indicate that these same processes are positive contributors to second language literacy acquisition. “Indeed, as the monolingual reading research contends, it appears that, among elementary-level ELLs, L2 oral language skills (including listening comprehension and vocabulary knowledge) are crucial in explaining variation in L2 reading comprehension (p.248).

One hundred thirty-five Spanish-English bilingual fourth graders from three large, urban elementary schools in Boston, Chicago, and El Paso, Texas participated in this study. “The data were collected in the 3rd year of a 4-year longitudinal study of the acquisition of English and Spanish literacy skills among bilingual Latina/o children” (p. 249). Sixty-nine percent of these students were taught to read in Spanish first while the remainders were illiterate in Spanish. Their families’ countries of origin varied from Mexico, Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico. Some were born in these countries while others were first, second, or even third generation born in the United States but in homes where only Spanish was spoken (p.249). The instruction program for all students was Success for All (SFA) which is highly structured. “Children spend 90 min per day in literacy instruction, in either Spanish or English. Most students who received Spanish-language instruction spent between 2 and 3 years learning to read in Spanish before being transitioned into English language SFA literacy instruction” (p.249). In other words, some students learned to read and write in Spanish before beginning their studies of literacy skills in English. These two separate groups are representative of the different teaching methods existing in the U.S.

A variety of tests were used to measure the success of instruction. “The Computer-Based Academic Assessment System (Sinatra & Royer, 1993) was used to measure decoding skills (alphabetic knowledge and fluency), and the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery (WLPB) was used to measure vocabulary knowledge, listening comprehension, and reading comprehension (p. 249). The results showed good alphabetic knowledge and reasonable decoding skills with no difference between instructional groups (those who began instruction in Spanish and transitioned to English and those whose instruction began in English). This was not the case in oral language and comprehension skills; “English-instructed children far outperformed those who received initial literacy instruction in Spanish” (p. 251). The average child in this study was performing at a high first-grade level on vocabulary knowledge and comprehending spoken English at a second-grade level. Their best results were in reading comprehension measures which were close to fourth grade on average (p. 251).

“As expected, alphabetic knowledge and fluency played important roles I predicting reading comprehension, indicating that a stronger grasp of the alphabetic principle of English, coupled with speedy word recognition, was essential for the successful comprehension of text. However these decoding skills were less predictive of reading comprehension than vocabulary and listening comprehension” (p.252). The research revealed that good listening comprehension has a strong positive effect on reading comprehension. This skill combined with adequate decoding skills produces even more improved reading comprehension.

Reading comprehension for second-language learners was found to progress and be influenced by skills in a manner similar to English learners. Paramount of these skills is vocabulary knowledge and listening comprehension. The vocabulary knowledge leads to the further development of listening comprehension, a factor that was found to correlate strongly with success in reading comprehension. Researchers determined that attention to vocabulary acquisition for ELL learners is of the utmost importance. Because of their lack of grammatical knowledge and other linguistic cues and features, these students cannot gain new vocabulary in the same incidental ways as their English counterparts. “How can they learn enough words to learn vocabulary through extensive reading when they do not know enough words to read well?” (Coady, 1997). Vocabulary instruction for these students should be focused and in depth. Intervention that targets fewer words “in deference to learning ‘useful words and word-learning strategies’” (Carlo, 2004), is advised. In this way, their new English skills will open the doors to improved education and an improved American society (p. 254).

Roller, C. M. & Matambo, A. R. (1992). Bilingual readers’ use of background knowledge in

learning from text. *Tesol Quarterly, 26,* 129-141.

Roller and Matambo replicated and expounded upon studies previously done by Carrell (1983, 1985) and Lee (1986) originally influenced by a study conducted by Bransford and Johnson (1972). These studies present ambiguous reading passages and then ask the subjects to retell the passage using as much detail as possible. Subjects who received background information prior to reading the passages were able to retell the passage most proficiently. Using background information or schema-based scenarios to guide comprehension is called top-down processing. Research has shown that for L1 and L2 readers alike the use of background knowledge and top-down processing significantly aids comprehension (Carrell, 1985; Hamp-Lyons, 1985; Hudson, 1982; Johnson, 1982; Taglieber, Johnson, & Yarbrough, 1988). However, Laufer and Sim (1985) conducted a study where this strategy method did not prove effective suggesting “there may be some threshold level of language competence that makes the teaching of strategies effective” (p. 130).

Carrell conducted extensive research using Bransford and Johnson’s method of ambiguous passages about a balloon serenade and washing clothes. Her research revealed that for high to intermediate L2 readers using background strategies helped, but beginning nonnative readers “failed to use background information because they were linguistically bound. The language itself required so much attention that nonnative readers tended to process at the word and sentence level (bottom-up processing) and were not attending to top-level organizational features and background information (top-down processing)” (p. 130). Carrell posited that “there may be a threshold level of language proficiency that allows readers to engage in top-down processing” (p. 130), a theory which has been supported by other research as well (Alderson, 1984; Clarke, 1979).

This study reconstructed the Bransford and Johnson study by presenting the Balloon Serenade passage (an unfamiliar passage) and the Washing Clothes (a familiar passage) with proficient L2 students in Zimbabwe. The passages were written in English and Shona (the native language) and one set had a picture accompanying the passage and another set did not. The researchers wanted to know if reading the passage in a native language versus a nonnative language would affect comprehension and also if context (having a picture included or not) would affect comprehension.

The subjects were 80 A-level seniors from a school in Harare, Zimbabwe. They are instructed in English and entirely proficient in English. Interestingly, “they would have had limited exposure to Shona reading because there are very few texts printed in Shona” (p. 132). These subjects were randomly split into four groups to either read passages in Shona- no picture, English- no picture, Shona- picture, or English-picture. After they read their two passages, they turned the page and wrote down all they could remember about the passage. Raters were trained to score the written protocols for accuracy to compare the four experimental conditions.

Interestingly, the subjects in this study actually scored higher in the English passages than their native Shona. However, it should be noted that the subjects were extremely proficient in English. Also, subjects with pictures to aid with context scored higher than those without. This study upheld the original findings of Carrell that high to intermediate L2 students benefit from background knowledge in comprehension just as native speakers do. It also confirmed other research findings that proficient readers use pictures to help construct meaning, thus aiding comprehension.

Saenz, Laura M., Fuchs, Lynn S., & Fuchs, Douglas (2005). Peer-assisted learning strategies for

English language learners with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children*. *71*, 231-247.

Schools in the United States have the most diverse student population of any country in the world. The diversity is manifested in differences in socioeconomic status, cultural background, and linguist background (Fletcher, Bos, & Johnson, 1999; Pallas, Natriello, & Mc Dill, 1989). It is estimated that “more than 2 million students come from non-English-speaking backgrounds (Fleishchman & Hopstock, 1993) and by the year 2020, this number will reach 6 million (Pallas et al., 1989)” (p. 231).

The situation of teaching second-language learners in today’s classroom is more complicated due to those among this population who have learning disabilities. There are “increasing concerns over the identification of appropriate assessment practices and effective instructional strategies for ELL” (p. 231). Much research has been dedicated to assessment practices which identify learning disabilities (LD) but very little to teaching strategies that have been scientifically proven to be effective in teaching reading to these students (p.232). Saenz, Fuchs & Fuchs, set out to study several such strategies known as PALS or *peer-assisted learning strategies.* These strategies consist of “three main activities: partner reading with retell, paragraph shrinking, and prediction relay” (p.232). The Grades 2-6 version of PALS is aimed at increasing strategic reading behavior reading fluency, and comprehension.

PALS have been shown effective with LD students in general education classrooms (Fuchs et al., 1997; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Hodge, & Mathes, 1994; Simmons, Fuchs, Fuchs, Mathes, & Hodges, 1995). These studies show significance in reading comprehension but less significance in reading fluency. Studies included low-, average-, but not high-achieving students. Since PALS were shown effective in improving reading comprehension in these groups, it would be of great benefit to use in the classroom where all these different types of learners are present. What research had not established was whether this type of teaching would increase reading skills in all students, including learning disabled ELL and high-achieving students (p. 232). PALS involve students reading aloud with their partner, discussing, summarizing, and receiving corrective feedback in a more individualized manner. “With respect to second language learning, theorists assert that second language learning is contingent on having opportunities to receive comprehensible input, produce comprehensible output, and negotiate the meaning of utterances or text, which have not been comprehended” (Krashen, 1980; Long & Porter, 1985; McGroarty, 1993; Swain, 1985).

To conduct this study, researchers selected 12 general educators in third- through sixth-grade transitional classrooms from one school district in South Texas. Each teacher taught two sessions of language arts. Classrooms were randomly assigned to either the PALS condition or the contrast condition. Each taught one classroom implementing PALS while their other classroom received standard instruction. Lesson plans were submitted to the researchers in order that the instruction strategies in each group could be reviewed. Each classroom had all ELL students and at least two students that were identified LD (p. 234). There were one hundred and thirty-two native Spanish-speaking included the study. Teachers received training on how to conduct PALS in their classroom. PALS were part of the reading instruction program three times a week for 35 minutes. Information on participating students was gathered over 15 weeks. Weaker reading students were paired with stronger students and student pairs were rotated every 3 to 4 weeks. Both students had the opportunity to play the role of tutor and tutee. The activities they performed were *partner reading with story retell, paragraph shrinking, and prediction relay* (p. 238). Teachers were able to use instructional materials of their choice but material was chosen for each pair based on the ability of the weaker reader.

Lesson plans of the teachers “were evaluated for information regarding (a) percentage of activities per week spent in one-to-one, small-group, whole-class instruction, and independent seatwork: and (b) percentage of activities where instruction was delivered by the teacher or peers” (p. 239).

To evaluate the effectiveness of the instruction in both conditioned (PALS) classrooms and non-conditioned classrooms, Saenz, Fuchs & Fuchs used the Comprehensive Reading Assessment Battery (CRAB). This tool uses “400-word traditional folktales, which were rewritten by Fuchs, Fuchs, and Hamlett (1989) to approximate a second- to third-grade readability level” (Fry, 1968). Results of testing are revealed in three scores: number of words read correctly, number of comprehension questions answered correctly, and number of maze choices correct (p. 240). Both words correct and number of maze choices were not found to improve significantly while questions answered correctly were found to be significantly significant (ES across student types was 1.02) The researchers agreed that a more comprehension study with more student participation would be necessary to determine if benefit of PALS is indeed limited to reading comprehension (p. 242).

Although reading fluency, or words correct were not proven to be positively affected by PALS strategies, it was determined that these types of instructional strategies were equally beneficial to low-, average-, and high achievement students as well as LD learners in the ELL classroom. The support for this type of teaching is very important for the teacher and child in the diverse classroom where teachers are attempting to identify methods that allow for optimal learning for all students in today’s classroom. Questioning of the teachers who participated in the studies agreed that PALS was easy to implement and students questioned confirmed they enjoyed the activities that allowed interaction with and support from their peers (p. 243). “The clearest conclusion to be drawn from study findings is that PALS improves the reading comprehension of ELL with and without LD in transitional bilingual education classrooms (p. 244).

Shih, M. (1992). Beyond comprehension exercises in the ESL academic classroom. *Tesol*

*Quarterly, 26,* 289-318.

Shih presents an argument for teachers of English for academic purposes (EAP) classes to abandon traditional methods and institute change based on researched best practice. Unlike the traditional classroom model emphasizing skill-building and short term comprehension taught often isolated from the rest of the students’ academic classes, Shih uses research and common sense to suggest a new paradigm for EAP classrooms. Shih believes that once an ESL student demonstrates adequate competency in English, the EAP teacher needs to move beyond story content or simple vocabulary and provide a stronger foundation for success in American schooling itself. “The concentration, memory, critical thinking, and study planning skills needed to learn and demonstrate learning in this academic process are demanding for native English speakers, and can be very discouraging for students being educated in a second language and in an unfamiliar educational system” (p. 290). Shih feels that the EAP classroom must reflect the same expectations and standards as the most rigorous of content classrooms to prepare students for success. Shih uses findings from other research surveys as a basis for her argument. Work by Christison & Krahnke (1986), Ostler (1980), and Smoke (1988) included survey answers from ESL students who experienced great challenge and frustration in content-area reading and learning. This finding remained true from middle school to the collegiate level. Shih offers suggestions for practioners to address these concerns.

Shih observes that most EAP classrooms “relatively short, varied readings” (p. 290) for students to practice comprehension skills. However, she convincingly argues that this type of reading assignment is not representative of most content area reading. Her first suggestion, repeated throughout the paper, is that reading offered in the EAP classroom must mirror text required in other academic areas for the ESL student to be most effective and meaningful. Shih addresses the quagmire of lack of background knowledge for the ESL reader by suggesting that teachers reinforce strategies that the student can control. Teaching students strategies to activate background knowledge is good, she says, but what if none exists? Shih found that studies suggested ESL students lacked awareness of text features to help them understand the text (Carrell, 1984, 1985, 1987; Meyer, Brandt, & Bluth, 1980; Slater, Graves, Scott, & Redd-Boyd, 1988) which they can control and translate from text to text. Also, research (Brown, Armbruster, & Baker, 1986; Flood & Lapp, 1990) “shows that successful readers are more aware of purposes for reading and adjust their reading processes accordingly, focus attention on major ideas rather than minor details, engage in self-questioning, notice comprehension failures, and take action to remedy such failures using ‘fix-up’ strategies” (p. 232-3). Therefore EAP teachers should spend more time teaching comprehension strategies the student can control, practicing those strategies so that the ESL student becomes aware of their cognitive process.

The most repeated theme throughout Shih’s article regarded the types of reading that EAP teachers provide for students. Students must have multiple opportunities to practice reading comprehension strategies for content texts. In order to address any cultural lags in understanding expectations of schooling or text, the EAP teacher must provide comparable experiences to assess understanding. Then if discrepancies do occur, adjustments can be made accordingly without the high stakes pressure of content area classrooms. The EAP teacher should be aware of what types of writing and reading assignments are required for content classes and practicing those in their classroom as well for the long term benefit of their students.

Vaughn, S, Linan-Thompson, S, Mathes, P. G., Cirino, P. T., Carlson, C. D., Pollard-Durodola,

S. D., Cardensas-Hagan, E, & Francis, D. J. (2006). Effectiveness of Spanish

intervention for first grade English language learners at risk for reading difficulties.

*Journal of Learning* *Disabilities.* *39*, 56-73.

Many teachers question how to modify or adapt reading instruction for English Language Learners. EL learners who are at risk for reading difficulties need an intervention before they simply slip through the cracks. “Native English speakers at risk for reading difficulties benefit from intensive, small group instruction that focuses on building skills in phonemic awareness, orthographic processing, phonics and decoding, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension” (Ball & Blachman, 1991; Bradley & Bryant, 1993; Bryne & Fielding-Barnsley, 1991; Foorman, Francis, Novy, & Liberman, 1991; Foorman & Torgesen, 2001; Lundberg, Frost, & Peterson, 1988; Swanson, Hoskyn, & Lee, 1999). Research suggests that there are strong relationships between phonological skills in Spanish and English. “Literacy instruction contributes to the development of foundation skills that lead to proficient literacy skills in Spanish, which can later transfer to English literacy” (Saville-Troike, 1984). Skilled Spanish readers transfer phonological awareness skills and comprehension skills to English reading. It is essential that effective interventions for students who have difficulties learning to read in Spanish be discovered. If educators had the knowledge about implementing interventions for English Language Learners, they would hopefully be able to reduce the number of students who would later be identified with reading problems or even a reading disability. The researchers involved in this study hope to determine “whether the reading difficulty with beginning readers is due to literacy difficulties, language difficulties, or other difficulties” (p. 57).

The framework for the intervention used in this study reflects “(a) the research on effective interventions for students with reading difficulties who are English speakers; (b) the phonology of the Spanish writing system, in which letter-sound correspondence is predictable and apparent; and (c) the fact that Spanish has many more multisyllabic words and fewer monosyllabic words than other alphabetic languages, such as English and French” (p. 57). The purpose of this study was to determine how an intervention in Spanish would influence outcomes in Spanish reading and in English and Spanish oral language skills.

This study took place in Texas because they contained a large population of English language learners. The subjects in this study consist of 69 students in 20 classrooms in 7 schools from 3 districts. All of the students were in first grade, were at risk for reading difficulties, and their home language was Spanish. The average English language learner population in kindergarten and first grade ranged from 77% to 100%. Most of the schools had more than 90% of their students qualify for free or reduced lunch. The students did not pass the screening in Spanish and were randomly assigned to a treatment or comparison group at their school.

Students were selected through a screening completed by all first grade students at the beginning of the school year. The tests included the Letter-Word Identification (LWID) subtest from the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery and the first five words from an experimental word reading list in Spanish that was used to assess initial word reading ability. The students needed to score below the 25th percentile for the 1st grade on the LWID subtest and be able to read only one word from the word list to participate in this study (p. 58). 361 students were tested and 73 qualified for the intervention based on their scores. 69 students participated in this study since the other 4 students transferred schools before the intervention began. The study started with 35 treatment students and 34 comparison students and ended with 31 treatment students and 33 comparison students. All of the students were Hispanic, the average age was 6.60 years at the pretest, and 45% of the students were female and 55% male.

Students were assessed in October for the pre-test and May for the posttest using a comprehensive set of language-and literacy-related measures in both English and Spanish. Students were assessed in both languages because the researchers were unsure how much time the classroom-based reading program would actually be provided in Spanish. Classroom teachers taught in both languages or switched to English for the 2nd half of 1st grade. The students were assessed with each of the following tests and subtests. For Letter Naming and Sound Identification, children were asked to identify each of the 26 letters of the English alphabet and the 30 letters of the Spanish alphabet. The students also needed to provide at least one sound for each of the letters in the English and Spanish alphabet. The Comprehensive Test of Phonological Processing (CTOPP) consisted of seven subtests including: Blending Words, Blending Non-words, Elision, Segmenting Words, Sound Matching, Non-Word Repetition, and Rapid Letter Naming. A phonological awareness composite score was created from the average of the CTOPP subtest scores of Sound Matching, Blending Words, Blending Non-Words, Segmenting Words, and Elision. The Test of Phonological Processing-Spanish (TOPP-S) contains similar items in each subtest to the ones in CTOPP. The TOPP-S relied on phonemes and syllables appropriate for the Spanish language. For the Woodcock Language Proficiency Battery-Revised (WLPB-R), Letter-Word Identification, Word Attack, Passage Comprehension, Listening Comprehension, Picture Vocabulary, Verbal Analogies, and Memory for Sentences were the subtests used. Letter-Word Identification was only used at the screening and Memory for Sentences was only used at the pretest. The assessment for the Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and the Spanish version Indicadores Dinamicos del Exito en la Lectura (IDEL), students orally read a passage on their grade level. The students were given a maximum of 3 seconds per word and 60 seconds for the entire passage. At the pretest, the Grade 1 beginning-of-year passage was administered and at posttest, both the Grade 1 beginning-and-end-of-year passages were tested in Spanish and English.

Before beginning the intervention, the six intervention teachers obtained 12 hours of professional development from the authors of the intervention. They received 6 more hours after 6 weeks of implementation. Teachers also were involved in 1 to 2 hour staff development sessions at each site. These meetings had the teachers view videotaped lessons with discussion and feedback, discuss issues regarding the implementation of the interventions, and work together in planning progress and growth for the students (p. 60). During the first month of the study, teachers meet weekly and then once a month throughout the rest of the implementation. The Program was created based on research from “(a) effective reading instruction in English with native English speakers with reading disabilities and reading difficulties; (b) the sequence and development of Spanish literacy acquisition; and (c) principles of effective instruction for developing oral language skills” (p. 61).

Treatment groups made up of 3 to 5 students met daily from October through May for 50 minutes. Comparison groups were not provided with an intervention by the research team. The bilingual classroom teachers provided the core reading instruction in Spanish and averaged 11.7 years of teaching experience. Instruction took place at a time that would not interfere with the core reading lessons in the general education classroom. The lessons moved at a quick pace and 7 to 10 activities were included in the 50 minutes. Students had the chance to actively respond and feedback was always given. The teacher normally modeled the new content, provided guided practice for students, and implemented independent practice. Letter-sound knowledge, phonemic awareness, speeded syllable reading, word recognition, fluency, and comprehension strategies were incorporated into the lessons. To teach alphabetic knowledge, students practiced previously taught letter-sound connections and learned the sounds of new letters. Teaching students to read syllables was an early focus in the study because of the syllabic nature of the Spanish language (p. 61). In the 2nd week of instruction, students began reading connected text daily which was decodable. Students were asked to make predictions, retell and sequence events, identify story elements and main ideas, and summarize what they read to help build their comprehension. Each day for 10 minutes, the instructors provided students with a book -reading and vocabulary activity. Two or three key vocabulary words were taught each day before the students listened to their teacher read a passage. The core reading curriculum used in the city was *Vamos de Fiesta!* (Ada, Campoy, & Solis, 2000), supplemented with *Estrellita* (Myer, 1990). The core reading program in the border city was *Esperanza* (Hagan, 1998). The core reading program in the midsize urban setting was *Lectura: Scott-Foresman* (Blanco et al., 2000), supplemented with *Estrellita* (Myer, 1990) or *Vamos de Fiesta!* (Ada et al., 2000).

During the beginning, middle, and end of the study, each teacher was videotaped implementing the Spanish intervention curriculum. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected based on observations of teacher behavior and how prepared each individual teacher was. Field notes were written by two of the observers in the study. The observers made on the minute observations of the teacher and students during reading and language arts and English language development in the beginning, middle, and end of the year. The teachers were also observed during their instruction three times during the school year. Each minute the observers recorded the subject and content area taught and the language used by the teacher during the instruction.

For the pretest performance, the only significant group difference was performance on the English DIBELS where the treatment group was able to read more words per minute than the comparison group. With the Spanish posttest performance, treatment and comparison students did not differ with Letter Naming, Letter Naming Fluency, and performance on the TOPP-S Rapid Letter Naming. The results of the Phonological Awareness TOPP-S subtests report that the treatment group correctly answered an average of 63% of the items for each subtest and the comparison students answered 52% correct. However, for Non-Word Repetition, the two groups’ averages were the same. On the WLPB-R oral language subtests, the treatment group and comparison group did not differ with Picture Vocabulary and Verbal Analogies. The treatment group did outperform the comparison group on Listening Comprehension. In the Word Attack subtest, the treatment students were able to apply phonic and structural analysis skills to pronounce phonetically regular nonsense words in Spanish. The treatment group showed a greater ability to supply missing words for the Comprehension subtest. There were no large differences for the Dictation subtest. As predicted, students read more words from the beginning-of-year story than from the end-of-year story, but the treatment group was able to more fluently decode Spanish words than the comparison group.

For the English posttest performance, not much improvement was made. “Although the posttest performances of the treatment group students across Spanish outcome measures were consistently, significantly, and meaningfully greater than those of comparison group students, few differences were observed between treatment and comparison group students on English outcome measures. In fact, across the domains of Letter Naming, Phonological Processing, and Reading and Academic Achievement, there were no differences in performance levels at posttest from pretest” (p. 65). Comparison group students slightly outperformed the treatment group students in WLPB-R Listening Comprehension and Verbal Analogies (p. 67).

This study helped the students at risk for reading difficulties or disabilities by providing them with seven months of intensive reading instruction. “Students at risk for reading difficulties-and even students with significant reading disabilities- benefit considerably when provided with systematic and explicit instruction in the critical indicators associated with the building of beginning reading skills” (Blachman et al., 2003; Torgesen et al., 2001; Vellutino et al., 1996; Wise, Ring, & Olson, 1999). Overall, the treatment group students performed significantly higher than the comparison students in phonemic awareness, word attack, word reading, reading comprehension, fluency, and language ability in Spanish. The treatment group also made significant improvement in almost all of the areas measured. Students in the treatment group ended their 1st grade year within the average range on fluency and passage comprehension and were above average on word attack. Students that participated in the study were better prepared for 2nd grade and acquired more knowledge and skills to help their transition to reading in English.

Some of the explanations for the success of the study were that Spanish orthography is more accurate to written language than the English language, repeated readings positively increase fluency, and that fluency is an important aid to comprehension. The researchers that conducted this study believe that the “fluency and comprehension gains made by these first graders will need to be monitored to determine whether they are maintained over time” as the text becomes more difficult and the vocabulary knowledge becomes more demanding (p. 68). The students who participated in this study demonstrate that decoding, fluency, and comprehension instruction are essential skills beginning readers need to grasp in Spanish just as much as they do in English.