

Collaboration Models for ELL Teachers and Content Teachers

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1.2. Case Study and Rationale

What teaching strategies worked best for Language Learners in the resource room? What teaching strategies work best for Language Learners when they are integrated on a rotary schedule? The following study examines collaborative content-based instruction models that incorporate socio-cultural awareness.

1.3 Summary of Relevant Literature

1.3.1 Fillmore and Snow (2000)

I looked at Fillmore and Snow's (2000) research which advocates for general classroom teachers to support ESL students in their classes. Fillmore and Snow suggest that today's teachers need access to a wide range of information to function well in the classroom. They argue that when the nation's teaching force is encountering an increasing number of children from immigrant families, children who speak little or no English on arrival at school, children whose families may be unfamiliar with the demands of North American schooling, the challenge to teach is even greater.

They also point out that the teaching force is not well equipped to help these children and those who speak vernacular dialects of English adjust to school and learn joyfully: too few teachers share or know about their students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, or understand the challenges inherent in learning to speak and read Standard English.

1.3.2 Short's (1994) Research on Changing Middle School Programs

Short's (1994) work focuses on changing the design of middle school programs to support English language learners. This article reports on findings from the first phase of an ongoing research project that is investigating English language learners in middle school social studies classrooms. This phase examined the academic language of history classes and implemented a series of lessons designed to integrate language and content objectives with the development of critical-thinking skills and information about the cultural diversity of colonial America. The article analyzes features of social studies academic language from text and classroom discourse and reviews cultural diversity as it is represented in popular textbooks. Also highlighted are successful strategies teachers used to facilitate students' comprehension of the

subject matter and improve their academic language skills. Many of these strategies are adaptations of ELL techniques that have been applied to content-area lessons. The conclusion is that an integrated language and social studies course may be an appropriate placement for English language learners who are preparing to enter mainstream classes.

1.3.3 Norris and Ortega's Research on Explicit Grammar Teaching

- 1 Norris and Ortega's (2000) research concluded that, by and large, the explicit analysis of grammar was more beneficial than the indirect, implicit treatment of grammar. More specifically, Norris and Ortega argued that: explicit types of instruction are more effective than implicit types and
- 2 Focus on Form (exclusive focus on meaning and content) and Focus on Forms (attention to forms in meaning-focused lessons) approaches produced similar outcomes.

The first argument supports the direct teaching of grammar and the second one specifies further that a grammatical syllabus is not necessarily a negative factor. That is, the explicit analysis of grammar can be implemented (a) through the fixed and predetermined structure of a grammatical lesson plan/syllabus, or (b) through the incidental analysis of grammar points as they arise in the context of communication or the analysis of language meaning in general.

1.3.4 Sokmen's (1997) Work on Vocabulary Development

Sokmen's (1997) surveys vocabulary teaching and highlights a number of key principles:

- a build a large sight vocabulary
- b integrate new words with old
- c provide a number of encounters with a word
- d promote a deep level of processing
- e facilitate imaging
- f make new words "real" by connecting them to the student's world in some way
- g use a variety of techniques
- h encourage independent learning strategies

1.3.5 Weaver and Cohen's (1996) Research on Strategies-Based Instruction

Weaver and Cohen outline a learner-centered approach to teaching that has two major components: (1) students are explicitly taught how, when, and why strategies can be used to facilitate language learning and language use tasks, and (2) strategies are integrated into everyday class materials, and may be explicitly or implicitly embedded into the language tasks.

The first of these components has often stood alone as the approach when strategies are included in the language classroom. The field has referred to this approach as "strategy training," "strategies instruction," or "learner training" (cf. Chamot & Rubin 1994:771, with regard to these three terms). In a typical classroom strategy training situation, the teachers describe, model, and give examples of potentially useful strategies; they elicit additional examples from students based on the students' own learning experiences; they lead small-group/whole class discussions about strategies (e.g., the broad range of strategies).

1.3.6 Legutke and Thomas' (1991) Findings on Highly Supported Whole Class Activities.

Legutke and Thomas support a theme and task-centred mode of teaching and learning which results from a joint process of negotiation between all participants. It allows for a wide scope of self-determined action for both the individual and the small group of learners within a general framework of a plan which defines goals and procedures. Project learning realises a dynamic balance between a process and a product orientation. (Legutke & Thomas 1991:160)

1.3.7 Freedman's (1993) Position and Gee's (1997) Answer

Freedman (1993) argues that attempts at explicit teaching of particular genres may be unhelpful, at the very least, and quite possibly detrimental. (This is, of course, except in situations where students are already or are about to become actively engaged in writing texts of a particular and limited genre). She appears to have in mind especially genres that are associated with texts of very fixed patterns or language features, and her argument draws heavily on Krashen's views regarding the limited value of explicit language instruction. However, she suggests (pp. 246-7) that teaching about and raising awareness of the importance of generic factors in general may well be of value to all writers.

Gee's (1997) common-sense argument is that it is simply sound pedagogic practice to teach learners what they need to know. She points out that if specific genres are required in order to be successful in school, then they need to be taught explicitly.

1.3.8 Hutchinson and Waters (1987)

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) advocate a *Learner-centred* approach. They draw a distinction between *learner-centred* and *learning-centered*. *Learner-centred* infers that learning is totally determined by the learner (and thus probably does not truly exist); whereas *learning-centered* involves learning as a "process of negotiations between individuals and society." They

incorporate Krashen's view that learners will acquire progressively fluent elements of language when they are ready.

1.3.9 Adger, Clair and Short: Professional Development Models for Including ESL Learners in Classroom Activities

In a three year study of professional development in a school system coping with major influxes of ESL students, (Adger, Clair and Short) brought together teams of teachers from four middle schools that had been strongly encouraged by the district administration to volunteer participation. The school teams included 7th and 8th grade English language arts teachers, ESL, and bilingual teachers, and school-based resource teachers.

Each month, beginning in November 1996, two cohorts of teacher teams from two middle schools met with LAB staff for a full day of professional development. Sessions focused on generating, discussing, and strengthening understandings in four key areas:

- standards-based reform in national and local perspective
- the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks for English Language

Arts and its connection to school practices

- the educational needs and strengths of English language learners, especially those related to second language acquisition and cross-cultural communication
- instructional practices that promote English language learners' achievement of standards in English language arts.

1.4 Problems and Possibilities

Teachers need long-term professional development to understand standards and their implications for teaching English language learners. They need time to explore attitudes about language, culture, and race that might influence their teaching of English language learners and to process new concepts and connect them to instruction. Time was needed to explore attitudes about language, culture and race that are relevant to teaching English language learners (ELL).

The implications for instruction across disciplines remain unclear, however. Does enhanced cultural and linguistic knowledge affect teachers' attitudes in ways that widen the scope of their teaching to support second language teaching across the curriculum? If not, what supports would be required? Where do ELL students experience the most challenge in a core class? How can the ESL resource teacher best support ELL students once they move out of the resource room?

1.4.1 Research Protocol

Building on Gee's (1997) academic skills inventory project, I developed two surveys for rotary subject teachers to indicate where ESL students needed the most support. The first survey asked teachers to informally assess the language skills of resource students in their classes. The second survey asked teachers to rate how important specific academic skills were in their classes. It was my hope to develop a list of strategies for subject teachers who were integrating ELL students in their program.

1.4.2 Focus Group

This study was conducted with groups of resource students between the ages of 7 and 10 and 11 and 14. Over 6 language groups were represented in the school population. These students came and went from the resource room and the amount of time they spent in the room depended upon their stage. In other words, stage 1 students spent up to five or six periods each day, and were "integrated" for 2 periods a day. Stage 2 and 3 students spent 3 or 4 periods each day in the resource room and were integrated into a rotary schedule for the rest of the day.

All four stage one students had been in Canada for less than one year. Stage 2 and 3 students had conversational skills and had made cultural adjustments to life in Canada. Ten students in stage two had basic conversational skills and had begun to make adjustments to the Canadian school system, but their reading and writing skills still needed high levels of support. And finally, ten students in stage three whose oral and listening skills were developing toward fluency, needed support to gain academic reading and writing skills for high school success.

Not surprisingly, teachers found that ELL students experienced challenges in participating in class discussions, participating in small groups, formulating questions when they were confused, and were shy about talking with the teacher. Teachers found that ELL students experienced difficulties in understanding lesson material and in understanding comments and questions in class. Teachers found that ESL students had difficulty mastering vocabulary, reading fluency, and making connections between ideas and making inferences. Teachers were reluctant to assign written work to ESL students. When they did, teachers found that students had trouble with grammar, mechanics, summarizing ideas, and explaining or defining terms.

Participating in class discussions, grouping ideas, summarizing ideas, finding main ideas, using standard grammar and listing ideas in logical order were the biggest academic concerns for core teachers.

1.5 Implications

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) state that a needs-analysis must determine the “necessities,lacks and wants,”of learners as well as curriculum objectives. If general speaking, listening, reading, writing and academic skills are necessities for academic success in the content classes of geography, history and science, the lacks could be defined as skills, knowledge, or abilities that ELL students do not possess as determined by their content teachers. The wants arise from a comparison of the two surveys, in order to determine appropriate ELL support and program accommodation.

The greatest wants of ELL students in my school setting were as follows: *participating in small groups, understanding lessons, reading fluency, and writing to summarize.*

Implications for instruction in both content classes and the resource room were as follows:

1.5.1. Participating in small groups:

Group work skills must be taught. Each person should have a well defined role. Keep the work “hands-on” by requiring students to perform an experiment, write on a chart, take notes in a graphic organizer. Pair new ELL students with a linguistic or academic partner.

1.5.2 Understanding Lessons:

Present information in smaller “bites” and support these “bites” of information with visual aids, using graphic organizers, picture charts, vocabulary sheets.

1.5.3 Reading Fluency:

Gather a variety of levels of reading materials when students are required to research a topic. Students may pair up when reading. Students may use the computer to translate, when necessary. Use role play to act out parts of a text, if it is a whole class reading assignment.

1.5.4 Writing to Summarize:

Teach text form vocabulary and structure. Model writing assignments for the whole class. Give immediate feedback. Encourage students to use the computer for editing.

1.6 Tracking Student Progress

One measure of determining whether improved instructional strategies work over the long term can be seen in how ELL students performed on the grade 10 literacy tests (OSSLT) over time. The following table tracks student literacy test scores over time:

The results show slow improvements. Many factors impact adolescent ELL students. More study should be focussed on the transition ELL students make to high school and the best mode of ELL program delivery. Improving instructional strategies both in the resource room and in the content classes allowed ELL middle school students to succeed in high school.

Appendices: Tables

1.4.3 Board Consultant Assessment of English Language Acquisition of students in the ESL program

| | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Stage 1 -beginning oral, listening, reading and writing skills in basic English | Stage 2 -emerging oral, listening, reading and writing skills in basic English | Stage 3-developing oral, listening, reading and writing skills in basic English | Stage 4-near fluent oral, listening, reading and writing in basic English |
|---|--|---|---|

1.4.3a Teacher Assessment of Language Skill Needs of ESL students in core Subject

| | 1. Often | 2. Moderately Often | 3. Sometimes | 4. Minimally/Never |
|--|----------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Participating in class discussions | 25% | 62% | | |
| 2. Participating in small groups | .12 | .37 | .37 | .12 |
| 3. Formulating Questions Clearly | | .5 | .5 | |
| 4. Responding to Questions | .12 | .25 | .62 | |
| 5. Interacting with the teacher: comments or questions | .12 | .12 | .75 | |
| 6. Giving oral presentations | .25 | .25 | .25 | .25 |
| 7. Pronunciation | .12 | .25 | .37 | .25 |

1.4.3b. Listening Skill Needs Assessment

| | 1. Often | 2. Moderately Often | 3. Sometimes | 4. Minimally/Never |
|--|----------|---------------------|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. Following Oral Dictation | .27 | .37 | .37 | .37 |
| 2. Understanding Lessons | .12 | .12 | .75 | |
| 3. Understanding Comments/Questions in class | .12 | .12 | .62 | .12 |
| 4. Understanding Films or Videos | | .25 | .12 | .37 |

1.4.3c Reading Skill Needs Inventory

| C. Reading Skills Support | 1. Often | 2. Moderately Often | 3. Sometimes | 4. Minimally | 5. Never |
|---------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| 1. vocabulary | .25 | .25 | .5 | | |
| 2. Reading fluency | .25 | .5 | .25 | | |
| 3. Making connections between ideas | .25 | .25 | .5 | | |
| 4. Distinguishing facts from opinions | .12 | .37 | .12 | .37 | |
| 5. Interpreting Charts and Graphs | | .37 | .25 | .37 | |
| 6. Making inferences | .25 | .75 | | | |

1.4.3d Writing Skill Needs Inventory

| D. Writing Skills (support needed) | 1. Often | 2. Moderately Often | 3. Sometimes | 4. Minimally | 5. Not Applicable |
|-------------------------------------|----------|---------------------|--------------|--------------|-------------------|
| Grammar | .37 | .25 | .37 | | |
| Mechanics | .25 | | .75 | | |
| Paragraph Form | .12 | .24 | .12 | | .5 |
| Organization of Ideas | | .24 | .5 | .25 | |
| Paragraph Development | | .37 | .12 | | .5 |
| Clearly stating main ideas | .12 | .12 | .5 | | .25 |
| Using specific supporting Details | | .37 | .12 | .37 | .25 |

| | | | | | |
|------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Summarizing | .12 | .12 | .75 | | |
| Explaining or Defining Terms | .12 | .12 | .75 | | |
| Comparing and contrasting | .25 | .25 | | .12 | .37 |
| Arguing a point | .12 | .12 | .37 | | .37 |
| Describing events in order | | .12 | .37 | .25 | .25 |

1.4.3e Teacher Assessment of Academic Skill Needs of ESL students in core Subjects:

| <u>Academic Skills: Degree of Importance</u> | 1. Low | 2. moderate | 3. moderately high | 4. High | 5. not applicable |
|--|--------|-------------|--------------------|---------|-------------------|
| Contributing to class discussions. | | | .55 | .44 | |
| Participating in class discussions? | | .22 | .33 | .44 | |
| Asking questions? | | .11 | .55 | .33 | |
| Giving oral presentations? | | .55 | .11 | .11 | |
| Finding main ideas? | .11 | | .33 | .55 | |
| Finding details? | .11 | .22 | .33 | .33 | |
| Writing paragraphs? | .11 | .44 | .33 | .11 | |
| Writing to persuade? | | .33 | .44 | | .22 |
| Comparing and contrasting? | .11 | .11 | .44 | .22 | .11 |
| Describing? | | .11 | .33 | .44 | .11 |
| Explaining events in logical order? | | | .33 | .55 | .11 |
| Showing cause and effect? | .11 | .11 | .44 | .22 | .11 |
| Grouping ideas? | | | .33 | .55 | .11 |
| Analyzing/ summarizing | | .11 | .11 | .77 | |
| Reading critically? | .22 | .33 | .22 | .11 | .11 |
| Refining arguments? | .22 | .33 | .22 | .22 | |

1.7 Language and Culture Unit: Biography Unit Objectives (middle school)

Students will be able to:

1 Skills

- Read and understand a variety of biographies
- Create a poster to inform others about the life of a famous person
- Research the life history of a family member through an interview
- Write a biography of a family member. *Introduce elements of culture: music, food, traditional folk tales, biographies of famous scientists, scholars, athletes in student's home culture, lifestyle, history*

2. Knowledge

- Recognize the biography genre using its features
- Gain an understanding about many different people and their contributions or accomplishments
- Understand and use the writing process
- Identify and understand ways biographies are researched and written

3. Value
 - Gain an appreciation of the biography genre
 - Recognize the importance of the biography genre

4. ESOL Standards Addressed
 - To use English to communicate in social settings: Students will use English to participate in social interactions
 - To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to interact in the classroom
 - To use English to achieve academically in all content areas: Students will use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form
 - To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways: Students will use the appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting

5. Curriculum Standards Addressed
 - Read, use, and identify the characteristics of nonfiction materials to gain information and content knowledge.
 - Use graphic aids.
 - Make predictions and ask questions about the text.
 - Identify and explain the contributions of text features to meaning
 - Identify and explain the organization of texts
 - Generate topics based on discussion of common experiences using techniques, such as graphic organizers, journal writing, listing, webbing, and discussion of prior experiences
 - Compose to express personal ideas to develop fluency using a variety of forms, such as journals, narratives, letters, reports, and paragraphs
 - Revise texts for clarity, completeness, and effectiveness
 - Use suitable traditional and electronic resources to edit final copies of text for correctness in language usage and conventions, such as capitalization, punctuation, and spelling
 - Prepare the final product for presentation to an audience

1.8 Unit for Multicultural Picture Books

1. Introduction to Picture Books
2. Picture Book Responses
3. Learning Log Responses
4. Jigsaw Activity
5. Partner Scripts
6. Reader's Theatre--writing for performances
7. Creating Keynote "trailers" of picture books
8. Creating a Class Song/Picture Book

1.8a Picture Books for a Science Unit on Water:

The Environment/Pollution/Ecology/Conservation

Oil Spill!, TD427 .P4B46 P-I

The Lorax, PZ7 .S487 E

Mr. Noah and the Second Flood, PZ7.B9342

Lockie Leonard, Scumbuster, PZ7 .W7683 I-JH

The Last Bit-Bear : a Fable, PZ7 .R56758

Just a Dream, PZ7 .V266 E

The Great Kapok Tree : a Tale of the Amazon rain forest, PZ7 .C4199 E

The Sea, the Storm, and the Mangrove Tangle, PZ7 .C41995 P-I

Planet Earth: 25 Environmental Projects You Can Build Yourself

Janice Van Cleve's Science Experiment Book Series

Film: Water Pollution (National Geographic) 2010, 08NG12172

Dream Journey, Alaska Wetlands and Wildlife, 2007, p. 105.

The Magic School Bus Wet All Over: A Book about the Water Cycle by Pat Relf.

The Snowflake: A Water Cycle Story by Neil Waldman.

A Drop Around the World by Barbara McKinney.

Water Dance by Thomas Locker.

Listen to the rain. Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault.