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English as a Second Language Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Literacy Instruction

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English as a Second Language Students' and Teachers' Perceptions of Effective Literacy

Instruction

by

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Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

Statement of the Problem

"¡Despiértate!" Andrea's mother calls to her at 7 a.m. every morning. Andrea wakes up just like every other third grade student. She eats breakfast, watches cartoons, and gets ready to go to school. During breakfast her brother and mother discuss how they slept and what the day holds for them, all in Spanish. As Andrea gets on the bus, her friend, Alana, calls, "Andrea sit next to me!" On the way to school the girls talk about their plans for the weekend, all in English. Once at school Andrea enters my classroom and I greet her and her peers and give them directions, all in English. Throughout the day Andrea listens to classmates, teachers, and administrators communicating, all in English. At the end of the day she returns home. Her mother asks her about her day, her family converses over supper, and then they watch a Spanish television program together all while listening and speaking Spanish.

At school the only instructional time when Andrea receives instruction designed for her specific needs, as a student who comes from a home in which a language other than English is spoken, is when she and a small group of her peers leave their classrooms to go to intervention services. Andrea is below her native English speaking grade level peers due to the fact that she is negotiating different languages in and out of school.

Significance of the Problem

Artiles and Ortiz (2002) state that a large number of students whose first language is not English are enrolled in special education intervention services. In a majority of schools throughout the country, literacy instruction is not aimed toward students who speak a language other than English at home as their primary language (Ernest, 1994). Andrea and her peers are defined as English as a second language (ESL) students (Ernest, 1994).

English Language Learners (ELL) is defined as another form of ESL (Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, & Kasai, 2014). ELL and ESL are very similar in that both students are learning English as a second language. English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) is a term used to describe students whose more than one native language spoken at home (Buxton, Kayumova, & Allexsaht-Snider, 2013).

Spanish is one of many primary languages that students bring to school. Others include French, German, Italian, and Chinese. According to the United States Census Bureau (2011) there are approximately 36,170,544 Spanish speaking citizens in the United States. This shows the vast amount of people who are speaking Spanish in our country. More specifically, the New York State Department of Education (2014) states that there are approximately 300,000 ESL students in New York State.

As a melting pot culture, I believe we should be doing all we can in order to make sure that our education systems are changing with our population in order to best meet the needs of all students. Schools especially should be a place where all are welcome. Calderón, Slavin and Sánchez (2011) stated that the population of ESL students in K-12 public schools during the 2007-2008 school year was 10.6 percent. This number is only growing with every school year. I believe that we should have programs in place that help ESL students and families feel welcome in the school community. Having a home to school connection plays a huge part in all students' success. One strategy to support ESL students and their families would be for the school to have a translator.

Teachers who have certifications specifically for teaching students who are learning in English as their second language are called Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) (LaFond, 2009).

I recognize that all schools do not need to have their main focus be on instructing ESL students. Still, I believe educational institutions should have programs, services, and support for all of their students. This includes ESL, special education, and any other student population that may need extra attention.

Huang (2010) points out that ESOL students often struggle in school because they have difficulties listening and comprehending academic language. Breiseth (2013) states translating the language that students are hearing (typically English) into the language that they hear in their head can be a difficult task, especially when they may not understand the academic language.

I believe that the literacy instruction I provide should be in English and focused on methods that support my students. Zhang (2010) conducted a study to determine how to best meet the needs of the freshman Chinese ESL students' learning of English and found that the use of online instruction through Blackboard online teaching method was very helpful in giving the ESL students extra support. The students were able to work collaboratively online. I think that online support would be great for ESL students because it would allow them to do school work at home with their parents and encourage parent to school connections. This would require additional training for the teachers and necessitate families have access to technology at home.

If I am to meet the needs of *all* students then I must pay attention to my ESL students. I wonder if it is possible for me to support all of my students' develop literacy skills while still reaching Andrea's specific ESL needs?

I work in a school district where there are a very large number of ESL students. There are two ESL teachers who push into classrooms to assist teachers with English language arts lessons working specifically with the ESL students. These teachers also work with students out

throughout the day on the ESL students' specific needs, just like Andrea. I think that it is great that the ESL students receive ESL services to support their literacy needs; however, Andrea and her peers typically receive ESL services five times a week for 40 minute increments. I believe that Andrea should have more time to have her specific ESL needs in literacy focused on other than during just their ESL service times; it should be incorporated into the teacher's instruction. I believe Andrea should be receiving support in my classroom throughout the day.

I learned throughout my teacher certification course work that I should be using instruction that enables all of my students to learn. One of the most effective approaches I learned to reach all students is the use of differentiated instruction, which is a method in which teachers instruct to meet the needs of all learning styles (Watts-Taffe et. al.,2012). Much of my educational preparation was aimed at supporting students in inclusive learning environments. . I agree that a large portion of our time learning how to be the effective teachers should be aimed at inclusive education or special education as these approaches support the range of learners in today's classrooms.

With the growing number of ESL students it is important that I and my fellow educators changing our instructional methods to meet their needs. Lesaux and Kieffer (2010) compared the comprehension scores of 581 sixth-grade ESL students with their peers on The Gates-MacGinitie Reading Comprehension (MacGinitie, 2000) literacy assessments. The scores of the ESL students were significantly lower than those of their peers. Specifically, 54 percent of the students scored below the 35th percentile. The results of the study encouraged teachers to not group ESL students in the same intervention groups during the English language arts block because each other students has their own individual needs. The study's findings also suggest that ESL students should be receiving explicit instruction with rich literacy opportunities. The

study's findings, I feel, should be eye opening to all educators in that we need to do more to support the needs of our ESL students. These test results are not typically uncommon. I often see lower scores for the ESL students in my school. There are factors that affect ESL students' abilities to score well on literacy assessments such as the amount of time they spend speaking English and the services and support they receive.

Purpose of the Study

My primary purpose for conducting this qualitative study was to gain insight into effective literacy teaching practices for ESL students by interviewing English as a second language teachers and students who speak English as a second language.

I conducted this study to help me understand what teachers and students believe are the most effective ways to support ESL students. I anticipate that the findings from the study will benefit me and my students. I recognize that building my repertoire of literacy strategies for students whose first language is not English will support my future students.

Since The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) (Lopez, 2004) began, I have heard many criticisms from teachers and parents regarding the amount of testing and the restricting teaching methods now in place in schools. Whether this is true or not one thing that the implementation of NCLB did was classify ESL students for extra support (Lopez, 2004). It included them in categories of students who required more attention. Payan and Nettles (2006) highlight that "NCLB requires all states to identify English learners, measure their English proficiency, and include them in state testing programs that assess academic skills." (p. 2). NCLB made proactive

movements in ESL education by acknowledging the significance of supporting ESL students (Payan & Nettles, 2006).

With recent implementations of the Common Core State Standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014) there has been further special attention placed on ESL students. The Common Core State Standards include information for how teachers can support the ESL students (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014). Some of these supports for English language arts include training school personnel who can provide services for ESL students, providing equal opportunities for the ESL students at school and continuous assessment and reaction, and staff members who are fluent enough to support the students' needs (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2014).

Since educational policies require educators to identify and assist ESL students, I believe that I should be doing more to identify and assist them. I anticipate that the findings from this study will help me support the literacy development of my ESL students.

My research questions were: How do teachers who work with English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction? and How do English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction? Seeking answers to these two questions enabled me to look at ESL literacy instruction through the eyes of both the students and ESL teachers in my school. Through interviews and observations of the students and teachers and my review of research I increased my ability to reach all of my students during literacy lessons. I anticipate that the findings of this study will enable me to become a more effective teacher by helping me understand appropriate specific literacy instruction methods and insights into what students believe are effective techniques.

Study Approach

I collected qualitative data through observations; and interviews to gain insight into ESL teachers' and students' perspectives on effective literacy instruction. . My research looked at their perceptions of effective literacy instruction. I interviewed and observed four ESL students and two ESL teachers. The students attend the school where I teach and the teachers are my coworkers.

My observations of the teachers' literacy instruction and the students' behaviors enabled me to see how these perceptions are actually carried out during the literacy lessons. After the first interview and observation of the literacy lesson I conducted a second interview with the ESL teachers.

Conducting the interviews and observations took four weeks. During the first week, I handed out the IRB permission slips to the ESL teachers and students. In the second week, I collected the IRB permission slips from the ESL teachers and students gathering the slips from students took many days and reminders to give their forms to their parents. During the third week, I conducted the initial interviews with the students and the teachers. The fourth week, I conducted observations and the follow up interviews with the ESL teachers. Throughout the four weeks, I continued to read literature and research related to supporting the literacy development of ESL students.

Rationale

I selected this specific research topic because of my current teaching position and my desire to support all students. Working with Andrea and a number of ESL students has opened my eyes to the need for extended literacy teaching and learning opportunities for these students. Conducting interviews and observations has helped me developed a clearer understanding of how I can design literacy instruction to support the literacy development of ESL students.

I conducted one-on-one interviews with the teachers. The teachers' responses to the interview questions enabled me to understand how they support the literacy development of their ESL students. The combination of interviews and observations provided a holistic and comprehensive representation of the teachers' beliefs of literacy instruction they use to support their ESL students.

I gained similar benefits from my interviews and observations of the students. I believe that the student were the best people to ask about effective literacy instruction because they are receiving ESL services and using two languages between home and school. Also, during the observations I was able to observe behaviors and actions that seem to help the students with certain aspects of literacy that they were not able to fully articulate during the interviews.

Summary

In my work with various grade levels and in different classroom settings (regular, self-contained, and ESL) I have realized that the ESL students are receiving support only during their allotted ESL services time. I think that it is important for ESL students to have a variety of

opportunities to develop their literacy skills and receive the types of supports they need to be successful.

I think that it is important to support the needs of all the students. The findings from this study will enable me to continue to build my collection of teaching skills and strategies.

Conducting interviews and observations of ESL students and teachers enabled me to understand literacy instruction from a variety of perspectives. My interviews with and observations of the teachers and students helped me build my knowledge and understanding of literacy practices that support ESL students.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

To give me the best research study I have review literature on English as a second language literacy instruction. I looked at various aspects and points of view on similar topics and summarized my findings.

Effective Strategies to Support ESL Students and Their Families

Through my search for effective instruction for English as a second language students I have found that a majority of research focuses on the various kinds of support provided to students at their schools. One form of support is referred to as push in services where an ESL teacher comes into the classroom to work with the ESL students. This would consist of an ESL teacher coming into the student's classroom and giving support at various times throughout the day. Another form of support is referred to as push out services where the student is pulled out of the general education classroom and taken to the ESL teachers' room and provided extra support there *(*Harper, Mendoza, & Platt, 2003*)*. During this time the ESL teacher may work with the students on specific needs that the student may have, give reading support, or reinforce skills in literacy.

I believe the general education classroom teachers should receive professional development in order to understand how to effectively support ESL students and develop a repertoire of teaching methods to help ESL students learn in a language that is not their native one. Newman (2010) provided a framework for what the training programs in schools should look like for those teachers who work with ESL students. Newman (2010) made many arguments that demonstrate how schools should be providing support to the teachers. Newman

(2010) suggests that teachers receive professional development on how to modify their lessons to make content more accessible for ESL students to understand. This could range from making a given text at a lower reading level, changing the manner in which an assessment is presented, or providing the students with different materials. Newman (2010) is not suggesting that teachers make anything easier for a student because he/she is classified as an ESL student, but that content should still be stimulating and at an appropriate challenging level for every student.

Gatbonton (1999) studied ESL teachers and their pedagogical thoughts to understand what they found important while teaching and found that the four ESL teachers in the study found that during lessons they were doing many modifications for their students through quick decisions. The ESL teachers took into consideration many aspects of their students' language acquisition and their specific needs. Gatbonton also found that novice teachers were able to learn skills that the more experienced teachers use while teaching quickly; however, it took time for them to apply the skills such as decision making, observation and note taking.

Another major way to support ESL students is through home to school connection (Dyson, 2001). It is imperative that the classroom teacher have ongoing and clear communication with families so parents know what is going on in the classroom. Dyson (2001) studied the communication between home and school of Chinese immigrant families. Dyson conducted the study of 40 recent Chinese immigrant parents who spoke some English and 46 children between the ages of 7 to 13. The families all lived in Canada. Dyson highlights several great points in areas of ESL students' home to school needs: the language barrier, different views on schooling, and fear of language obstacles. Dyson interviewed the parents of students. Dyson (2001) found that the parents of ESL students often want to be involved in their child's education but there are many factors such as language barriers that can preventing this. Dyson also stated

that the poor communication between home and school put the students in danger of failure due to lack of support. The findings of the study show that the parents expected and desired quality communication with the school. Dyson recommends that the best way to establish this is to initiate communication from the beginning of the school year. She suggests teachers contact the parents to find out how they desire to communicate with school. In her study, Dyson found that parents wanted to communicate with the schools, through a variety of ways such as newsletters, face to face conferences, and phone calls.

Modified Literacy Lessons for ESL Students

One of the most reoccurring themes in my review of the literature and previous work with ESL teachers has been the need for ESL students to work on vocabulary (Saigh & Schmitt, 2012). Brown and Perry (1991) studied the different ways 60 Arabic-speaking students were given vocabulary instruction. Three groups were presented vocabulary with the following methods: words with keywords, example sentences, and definitions or a mixture of these. The ESL participants were then assessed on their ability to recall the vocabulary terms. The results showed that the participants who received a keyword, the definition, and an example sentence had the best scores on the assessments, which shows that the participants were able to recall the words the best when they were provided with more detail than just the word meaning. The findings suggest that teachers should provide ESL students with various forms of vocabulary meaning during instruction.

Lightbown and Spada (2006) explored the methods teachers used to help ESL students learn vocabulary. The researchers stated that students often struggle with vocabulary knowledge if they cannot read 95 percent of the text. Vocabulary knowledge becomes difficult for ESL

students if they are reading a text that has many words that they do not know because figuring words out by using surrounding words becomes impossible. Another interesting aspect of vocabulary competence the researchers explored was the difference between the students' native language and English. They recognized that depending on how closely related the students' heritage language and English are learning vocabulary for these students may not be as difficult. Some students are to figure out words due to the fact that the English word looks or sounds similar to the word in their native language.

Researchers also discusses that conversations with peers are important to student growth (Haas & Smoke, 1990). Kim (2008), for example, researched the importance of oral and written language instruction for ESL students versus oral-only instruction. Kim's participants were two kindergarten ESL students, one from China and one from Korea. Kim compared the results of the participants' scores on an oral language assessment. The findings stated that ESL students need to learn English through literacy and oral language. Kim also focused on the importance of written language in ESL instruction. The findings demonstrate the importance of having student communicate both orally and in written form. Communicating written and orally enables students to use their second language in variety of ways and to become more comfortable with it. The study's findings demonstrate that students should be using English in both oral and written forms.

There are differences in the research about whether ESL students should be allowed to use their native language in the school setting or not. Artiles and Ortiz (2002) mention a very unique situation in their book, *English Language Learners with Special Education Needs: Identification, Assessment, and Instruction*. Two teacher work at a school in which students are taught in their native language, Spanish as a first language students are taught in Spanish, and

English as a first language students are taught in English. The teachers wanted to challenge this idea and begin a program that would enable ESL students to learn in English through scaffolding instruction. Artiles and Ortiz (2002) give many models of scaffolded instruction throughout their text. Most are centered on the concept that teaching instruction can happen using both languages. For example, one major idea is that the students have good control over their first language. Meaning, the students need to be fluent in their native language before they can begin building skills in another language (Artiles & Ortiz, 2002). Attempting to build two languages would be challenging for the students they would have to learn the grammar, pronunciation, and conventions of the languages. The teachers scaffolded lessons by teaching in the second language and using the primary language as reinforcement for context that the students were struggling with. The teachers also grouped the students based on their Spanish and English abilities. The teachers indicate that the process of scaffolding lessons from one language to another was very time consuming and difficult to find materials the same in Spanish and English, but was very effective for the students.

Develop Secondary Language with Various Techniques

MacPherson (2010) refers to a model that encourages a learning environment that embraces multicultural backgrounds. MacPherson (2010) states, "In this respect, the model recognizes that teaching is at heart an art, not a science, and that effective teaching involves creativity and the ability to respond to the lived experience and context of distinctive learners, classrooms, and communities" (p. 283). This belief summarizes that ESL students need to feel that their culture is valued. This can be done by giving the students opportunities to share their cultures traditions, foods, history, or values. The other part of that statement that is important is

that lived experiences need to be taking into consideration because background knowledge is such a large part of learning (MacPherson, 2010).

Another effective ESL instruction method is the use of small groups (Kamps, et al., 2007). Small groups make it easier for the teacher to focus on specific needs during instructional time. Tompkins (2010) states that there are many benefits for using small group instruction for guided reading with ESL students. One advantage of small groups is that the students typically feel safer in small groups performing than in whole group because there is closer working time with the teacher. Another benefit is that during small group instruction, students' specific literacy needs are able to be focused on better, for example some teachers may have groups based on specific needs such as fluency, vocabulary, or comprehension. Tompkins (2010) emphasized that it is important that the students in small groups are presented with text they can read with approximately 90 percent accuracy. Another value of using small groups with ESL students, according to Tompkins, is that the conversations within the groups can benefit students because the teacher is able to complement the students on strategies they use such as decoding words or fluency checks, or have small teachable moments in which the teacher assists the students during literacy lessons.

Another component of effective ESL instruction relates to how teachers modify assessments (Tannenbaum, 1996). Tannenbaum (1996) suggests that while working with ESL students it is important to compare a student's growth over time, rather than compare it to another student. Tannenbaum (1996) also suggests that teachers should focus ESL literacy instruction on what the students' strengths are rather than their weaknesses. Tompkins (2010) suggests teachers have students use a word wall to complete a graphic instead of writing essays. She believes graphic organizers can be an effective way to engage ESL students because they do

17

not require students to use a lot text or follow directions that may confuse them. Tompkins also suggests teachers have conversations with students instead of asking them to complete traditional written assessment. During the conversations, the students can talk with the teacher and convey what they have learned. Tompkins recommends teachers have students use portfolios to document their growth throughout a school year. This process would then enable teachers to base their grades over the course of a year rather than scoring them on a single test score.

Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, and Xiaoqin (2006) recommend similar modifications for ESL students while assessing their knowledge. They suggest that, if possible, an ESL teacher assist the student with a test. The teachers may be able to read directions or questions to the students based on the test. Another present in this case was to let the ESL students work collaboratively together to demonstrate their understanding of concepts. Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, and Xiaoqin (2006) suggest teachers provide students with opportunities to respond in their native language if there is a translator available.

Conclusion

Through my review of literature I have found many effective ESL teaching instruction methods. Research suggests many different aspects of ESL literacy instruction for students to make educational growth. Modifying lessons and assessments enables the students to have opportunities in school that language barriers may prevent.

Welcoming the ESL students into a classroom through cultural acknowledgment is important to make them feel part of the learning community. The use of small group instruction is important to get the students engaged on specific needs that they may have. Building

vocabulary was emphasized in many of the research articles indicating that it is an area that

needs particular attention during ESL literacy instruction.

Chapter Three: Methods and Procedures

I believe it is the responsibility of both the school district and its teachers to provide services to meet the needs of all students. I recognize that meeting students' needs can be challenging. There is a wide range of services offered through the school district in which I work. The most important one is the services provided to the large population of English as a second language students. The ESL students receive both pull out and push in services from ESL teachers to support their literacy needs. However, I believe my colleagues and I should also be able to provide support to meet the literacy needs of the students in our classrooms.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into the effective literacy practices for ESL students. The results of the study helped me answer the research questions: How do teachers who work with English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction? and How do English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction?

Participants

The participants of this study were four ESL students and two teachers. I interviewed the students and the ESL teachers. The ESL teachers specialize in ESL instruction in the school elementary in which I teach. I chose the students based on their availability and their parental permission. I assigned each participant a pseudonym to maintain his or her confidentiality.

The first student was seven year old Laura. She is in second grade. Laura was born in the United States. She lives with her mother and English and Spanish are both spoken at home.

The second student is eight year old Jesse. He is in second grade. He was born in Puerto Rico and moved to the United States this past fall. Jesse lives with his mom. Academics are very important to Jesse and his mother.

The third student is eight year old Randy. He is in second grade. Randy was born in the United States. His mom speaks no English and lives with their family from Puerto Rico.

The fourth student is nine year old Nickie. She is in third grade. Nickie has been in the United States for a year and a half. She comes from a Spanish only speaking-home.

The first teacher is Ms. Margaret. She has been teaching for eight years. She is certified in ESOL K-12, elementary education 1-6, and Spanish education 7-12.

The second teacher is Ms. Leslie. This is her first year teaching. She is certified in ESOL K-12.

Context of the Study

I conducted this study in a small, rural school district in western New York. There are approximately 500 students in the k-12 school building. There are 41 ESL students in the k-12 population. The classrooms in which I will conduct my observations have many visuals set up for the students. There is a large amount of literacy material available within the classroom. Both rooms have lots of visuals and writing materials. Many of the objects in the rooms are labeled in order to help the ESL students identify the words written in English. There are many books in the classrooms for the students to choice from. Both ESL classrooms have some form of behavior boards for the students in which they are rewarded if they get to a certain point.

My Positionality as the Researcher

Reflecting upon my positionality on my research is important. Taking into consideration my race, gender, class, education, experiences, gender, and personal beliefs will enable me to provide an unbiased view of my research outcomes. As Foote and Bartell (2011) state, researchers put emphasis on certain research questions and methods based on their experiences and beliefs. These beliefs are formed by the combination of race, class, gender, educational experiences, along with many other aspects.

I am a white male from a middle class family. My father owns a farm and my mother ran a daycare from our home. I completed my bachelors of science in English at The College of Brockport in New York State. I am currently pursing my master's degree in literacy education at The College at Brockport in New York State. I have my initial teaching certificate from New York State in childhood education, grades one through six, along with students with disabilities education, grades one through six. At the completion of my master's degree I will hold my certification in literacy birth through six.

I am currently a substitute teacher working as a long term second grade teacher. I have been at the current school where I will conduct this study for three years. I have subbed in all grade level and content areas. I had a long term substitute position in a k-3 behavioral self-contained classroom for two months last year.

I believe that literacy instruction should be integrated into all aspects of education, and that literacy should be emphasized into all subjects taught throughout the day. I believe that providing rich literacy opportunities throughout the day is the most effective way to enhance all students' literacy growth. I also believe that teachers should use the balanced literacy framework (Tompkins 2010). Tompkins (2010) defines balanced literacy as containing several aspects:

reading and writing, use of oral language, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, spelling, grammar, punctuation, content area literacy instruction, student collaboration with peers, and engagement in authentic literacy activities. I believe that all teachers should try and incorporate all of these aspects into their literacy instruction. I am personally devoted to this study because I want to gain insight of literacy instruction that will help me give the ESL students the best balanced literacy instruction in my classroom.

Data Collection

In order to gain full understanding of effective ESL literacy instruction I collected data from various sources. I conducted interviews, made observations, and took observational field notes. The sources of data collection provided me with perceptions of ESL teachers and students to give me a comprehensive understanding of effective literacy instruction.

Interviews

I conducted one-on-one interviews with the ESL teachers and students. I used the interview questions to gain insight into the teachers' (see Appendix A) and students' perspectives (see Appendix B) on effective literacy instruction. During the interviews, I used an audio recording device to ensure all data was collected effectively. The initial and follow-up interviews with the teachers were open ended questions to allow them to respond with their own beliefs on literacy instruction. The interview questions with the students were also open ended questions in anticipation that they will be able to respond with their own thoughts on what they feel is effective literacy instruction. I also conducted follow-up interviews with the ESL teachers after I observe the lessons to gain deeper insights into the teachers' practices.

Observations

After the initial teacher and student interviews I conducted observations of the two teachers. During the observations I documented the specific literacy strategies the ESL teachers used. I also paid attention to the strategies that the students used.

I was not involved in the instruction during the observations. I took observational notes during the interviews. I took notes on the responses from the interviews, but also on my personal reactions to the lessons. I took notes on what I saw that I believed was working for the ESL students during the lesson. The purpose of the observations was to gain deeper understanding of effective ESL literacy instruction. I recorded notes of students' and teachers' actions as well as the conversations that took place.

Data Analysis

I took all the sources of information and reviewed the interviews with the observational notes information. I compared the ESL literacy instruction methods from the responses to the interviews with the observed methods.

Interviews

I transcribed each interview verbatim. I then read each transcript and participated in a process of analyzing the information given from the responses. I looked at what the ESL teachers and students said about the methods in literacy instruction that they felt were effective.

I then decided the literacy methods I needed to look for during the observations. I paid special attention to the literacy methods mentioned in the initial interviews and made field notes of them during the observations to give me a deeper understanding of how these methods look.

After the observations I reviewed the observational notes to see what literacy teaching methods mentioned in the interviews were prevalent during the lessons. I also analyzed the notes from the observations to comprehend ESL literacy instruction.

Observations

I read and reread the notes that I took during observation. I observed the two ESL teachers' lessons and looked for similarities, major differences, and literacy instruction techniques between and across the two classes. The notes gave me insight into what I felt were effective literacy strategies such as hands-on learning, using student interest for engagement, and learning vocabulary through whole language and not just one word memorization. I analyzed the teachers' instruction based on the literature related to literacy instruction for ESL students.

Procedures

I took four weeks to complete the data collection and analysis. The following is the schedule of the data collection process:

Week One

- Handed out the IRB permission forms to principals, teachers, and students.

Week Two

- Worked to collect the IRB forms from the principals, teachers, and students.

Week Three

- Conducted initial interviews with teachers and students.

Week Four

- Conducted observations and follow up interviews with teachers.

Criteria for Trustworthiness

It is my responsibility as a teacher-researcher to perform all aspects of this study without biased or unethical manner. I used triangulation during the analysis of the interviews and observations to guarantee that all findings were impartial. I ensured transferability by reporting teacher and student details along with the context of the research study. I participated in a four week study through prolonged engagement to collect the data. Giving a detailed description of the entire research process ensured dependability. I used member checking with the teacher participants to ensure that my findings were reliable and accurate.

Limitations of the Study

There are limitations to this study, as there are with any educational research study. One limitation is related to the fact that since some of the ESL students struggle with language they may not have been able to fully articulate their responses during the interviews. Another possible limitation may be that the teachers who I interview gave answers to the questions based on what they believe they should be doing instead of what they are actually doing. Both instances may have decreased the validity of the study.

An additional limitation is that I only conducted one observation of the literacy lessons in each classroom. Along with this is the fact that the teachers and students I observed may have changed their behaviors due to the fact that I was in the classroom. It was important for me to make it clear to the ESL teachers and students that I was an outsider and I was not there to criticize their teaching methods or their behaviors.

Summary

Meeting the needs of all students within a school district is an extremely complicated task. As a teacher, my focus is on meeting the needs of all students in the class, but in particular, the needs of the ESL. ESL students in the school in which I teach receive pull out and push in services for approximately 40 minutes each day. However, I believe that I need to provide additional instructional methods in my classroom to better meet the needs of all my students. This study allowed me to answer my research questions: How do teachers who work with English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction? and How do English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction?

I conducted interviews with and took observations of ESL students and teachers. The analysis of the data gave me insight into the ESL teachers' and students' perceptions on what they believed are effective literacy teaching methods. In order to determine accurate findings I ensured I was using data collection methods that were ethically fair. The results of my analysis will better my abilities into how I can be the most effective teacher to support the needs of my ESL students.

Chapter Four: Findings

In this chapter, I present the findings from my observations of and interviews with the ESL students and teachers. I conducted the research with two ESL teachers and four ESL students between the ages of seven and nine. The research questions that I investigated were: How do teachers who work with English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction? and How do English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction?

I collected data using a variety of methods. I interviewed each participant to develop an understanding of his/her views on ESL literacy instruction. I also conducted observations in the ESL teachers' classrooms to obtain an understanding of what these literacy techniques may look like.

In this chapter, I present the teachers' and students' interview responses as well as the perspectives from the observations through a case study of each participant.

Teacher Case Studies

Ms. Margaret: ESL Teacher

Ms. Margaret has been teaching for eight years. She is certified in TESOL (K-12), elementary education (1-6), and Spanish education (7-12). She pushes into and pulls students out of elementary classrooms and also teaches Spanish in the high school.

On June 12, 2014, I observed one of Ms. Margaret's ESL pull out sessions with four second graders. Prior to the observation I interviewed Ms. Margaret. During the interview she

highlighted some of the important aspects she believes are important in effective ESL literacy instruction. She stated,

> What I believe is the most effective literacy teaching method is whole language, we teach phonics and whole reading. We teach reading as a whole because if we only teach one part of it they're only going to get one part of it. Get whole picture and pieces to it. We do vocab studies, use it in a sentence, draw a picture of it, and give the meaning of it. We do pieces of reading like that but then practice reading as a whole. So, we observe how the words we learn about are used in a story or how they fit into a sentence. (06/12/14)

The whole language method was very prevalent during my observation. The students were reading about seeds and plants. They studied the words "seeds" and "plants" and stated differences and similarities between the two words. They then read a story about seeds turning into plants.

Ms. Margaret then called her friends over to the carpet where they continued to read the story and make connections between the words in the story. During the lesson Ms. Margaret stopped frequently and asked questions to prompt the students on their connections. She asked "Do all plants grow at the same speed?" the students all answered "No" "What do all plants need to grow?" the students all answered "water, soil, air, and sun." "What are the different parts of a plant?" to which the students responded "seed, roots, stem, leaves, and sometimes flowers."

Once they completed the story, Ms. Margaret had the students sit at a table. There, she had seeds that the students had planted and asked them to make observations and connections between the plants in front of them and what they had just read.

During the interview Ms. Margaret stated,

> It is helpful to have lots of hands-on learning with ESL students. I try to make something hands on as frequently as possible. I use white boards, games, power words, anything they can physically manipulate. (06/12/14)

Ms. Margaret had the students identify the parts of the plants in front of them that they had read about during the story. She asked students to point to the leaves, stem, roots, and seed.

During her post observation interview, Ms. Margaret stated,

> I think that the lesson went well. The students were able to make the connections between the text and the plants in front of them. The only piece that may have been challenging was that the students can sometimes get carried away when responding to connections and they end up talking about a different topic. If I could change the lesson I would have labeled the plant with the different pieces we talked about so they could get a better visual. (06/18/14)

Summary

During my interview and observation with Ms. Margaret I made many discoveries about ESL literacy instruction. She told me and showed me many different methods to use with ESL students during a literacy lesson. One of the most important methods that she discussed and demonstrated was the importance of hands-on learning. During the interview she mentioned that ESL students often struggle with knowing what something is in their native language, and they can have difficulty restating it in English. Using hands on materials provides a visual support other than just through a text.

Another important instructional technique that Ms. Margaret used was prompting. She told me during the interview,

> Don't assume they don't understand something. Also, don't assume they do. The nice thing about working with ESL students is you have more one on one time with them so you can get a better understanding of what they do and do not understand. The best way to figure this out is through questioning. (06/18/14)

Asking questions frequently helps to make sure that students are following along and comprehending what is happening. Ms. Margaret would ask basic comprehension questions such as "what did this page tell us?" Ms. Margaret told me that the students often struggle with responding because they are thinking about the answer in their native language, and it can be challenging for them to translate or respond in English. To me, this shows the importance of questioning and the use of wait time which was also demonstrated by Ms. Margaret.

The last important piece of ESL literacy instruction that Ms. Margaret identified and demonstrated was teaching vocabulary. She stated during the interviews that the best way to teach ESL students vocabulary is through the use of videos, games, books, hands-on activities, and drawing. She believes it is important to give the students a variety of ways to demonstrate the understanding of vocabulary words other than just written or orally.

Ms. Leslie: ESL Teacher

This is Ms. Leslie's first year of teaching. She is certified in ESOL (K-12). Ms. Leslie works with small groups of ESL elementary students and pushes into a third grade classroom.

I observed Ms. Leslie on June 11, 2014. Prior to the observation I interviewed her to gain insight into what she believes were effective ESL literacy instruction methods. She stated,

> I feel that a balanced literacy approach is the best method. By that I mean using authentic tasks such as using language in context and using the vocabulary in that text. I do not think that vocabulary should be taught by presenting a picture to the students and asking what it represents or showing them a word and asking what it means. We should give multiple examples of vocabulary to help the students better understand holistically what the word means. (06/11/14)

It was interesting to me that Ms. Leslie's beliefs mirror those of Ms. Margaret's. They both presented the fact that ESL students benefit from learning vocabulary by how the words look, what they mean, how they sound, and how they are used in context with stories.

Ms. Leslie stated another similar method to Ms. Margaret,

> I think that ESL students benefit from lots of visuals and hands-on methods such as the use of laptops, games, pictures, mini whiteboards, and I also often use a Spanish to English dictionary if students become stuck. (06/11/14)

Both teachers believe visuals and hands-on methods work best with ESL students. One idea that Ms. Leslie shared was the journals that she has her students keep. They write in them as a sort of portfolio to keep track of stories they have enjoyed and details they enjoyed from them.

Ms. Leslie discussed the way she modifies lessons or assessments for her ESL students. She stated,

I try to shorten certain assignments and make them more manageable. I usually

talk to the teacher and we come to an agreement about what is a reasonable goal

for the students. Maybe we say answer two questions instead of three or find two

details instead of three. Sometimes I give a vocabulary list that has pictures and

definitions for reinforcement. They also get separate locations, extended time, and

Spanish versions of test. (06/11/14)

Ms. Leslie shared that during state tests, ESL students may have a copies of the tests in

Spanish, but they must answer in English. She said that the copies in Spanish help the students

understand the task, but they have to be able to respond in English to receive credit.

During my observation of Ms. Leslie the four third grade students were working with

word endings such as, -ed, -ing, -ly, and –y. Ms. Leslie has written 20 words on the board and

the students were sitting at a table with her. Ms. Leslie read all of the words on the board with

the students. Once they read through the words Ms. Leslie gave them each a copy of the text. Ms.

Leslie told the students to underline the words that had the endings they previewed. While

reading the text, Ms. Leslie would stop and ask, "Does anybody see a word on this page that we

previewed?" the students responded yes and underlined the words they found.

Ms. Leslie gave the students highlighters to underline words found in the text, a copy of

the text, and personal white boards to rewrite the found words. These are simple hands-on ways

to help the ESL students engage and work with words that have the endings.

The students were continuing reading a story about a boy and his dog going on a camping

trip. During the reading, Ms. Leslie stopped and prompted the students to check for

understanding. She asked questions such as "What are the characters doing in the story" one of

the students responded with "The boy and his dog are going on a camping trip." She encouraged the students to make connections to other texts, asking, "What other story does this remind you of?" the students replied with "The Chocolate Touch." During the reading the students took turns reading and Ms. Leslie also read a few pages.

After the reading Ms. Leslie had the students write on their white boards words that they found while reading. She had the students put a box around the base word and leave the endings off. This demonstrates giving the students hands on experiences as well as independent practice with the words.

During the post observation interview, Ms. Leslie stated,

> I would say give everything you do a context and make sure you give students multiple exposures to content and vocabulary. The regular classroom setting can already be overwhelming and fast-paced with little repetition. Make the ESL classroom a place where students can really grasp concepts and vocabulary that they can apply elsewhere. (06/17/14)

Sometimes the regular classroom can be too much for ESL student to learn. Giving time for extra exposure to vocabulary can be beneficial to the students. One thing that Ms. Leslie stated that she thought she could have done differently during the lesson was to "Provide the students with a handout that provided extra practice with base and endings for words." Again, reinforcing the idea that ESL students should have multiple exposure to words in order to gain deeper understanding and have more practice with the vocabulary.

Summary

Ms. Leslie shared many similar ESL literacy instruction methods as Ms. Margaret. Both teachers stated that it is important to teach literacy in context and not just memorize one word. They also both mentioned the importance of using visuals and hands-on learning to engage students and strengthen concepts.

Ms. Leslie also showed the importance of reinforcement with vocabulary. She demonstrated how students should have multiple exposures to words in a variety of contexts. She used this method during her lesson to help ESL students understand the base and ending parts of the words.

Student Case Studies

Nickie: Third Grade ESL Student

Nickie is a nine year-old third grader. She has been living in the United Stated for a year and a half. She comes from a Spanish speaking home. Some of the interview questions were difficult for Nickie to understand so I reworded them.

During the interview on June 9, 2014 I asked Nickie what her ESL teacher does to help her read. She took several minutes before responding, "She helps me read words and spell." I prompted Nickie to tell me more about how her teacher helps her. She went on to tell me that her teacher "Helps me by sounding words out with me and making me practice reading." Nickie also told that it helps her when her ESL teacher "Tells me I can do it and not to give up."

On June 18, 2014 I observed Nickie's ESL time with Ms. Leslie. Each time Nickie became stuck on a word Ms. Leslie provided positive support to her to try and help her decode the words. During my observation, Nickie was also enthusiastic about learning. At one point, Ms. Leslie showed the four students how they could understand the base words and endings by saying, "Look plus –ing equals looking." At this point, Nickie stated, "It's like math, but with words!" From observing both her verbal and non-verbal communication, I could see that Nickie felt comfortable in Ms. Leslie's ESL room. She always made an attempt while reading.

During her interview, Nickie told me that when she gets stuck on a word while writing "Ms. Leslie will make me sound it out, break the sounds apart, and say the whole word together." This demonstrates how Ms. Leslie both supports her students and also how she encourages them to work independently to try and solve their struggles. With the combination of support and encouragement from Ms. Leslie, I anticipate that Nickie will be able to make growths in school.

Laura: Second Grade ESL Student

Laura is a seven year-old second grader. She was born in the United States and lives with her mother. Spanish and English are spoken in Laura's home. Laura works with Ms. Margaret during her ESL services.

During her interview I asked Laura how Ms. Margaret helps her become a better reader and writer. She responded,

Ms. Margaret will say the word with me. Then she will write it with me. She puts

dots on the paper and lets me trace the word. Then she will let me write it by

myself on a piece of paper. (06/10/14)

This statement from Laura explains one way that Ms. Margaret uses the reinforcement method

previously discussed. She has the student say the word, trace it, and then practice it on their own.

Another method that Laura mentioned was games. I asked Laura what she enjoyed most

about working with Ms. Margaret and she told me "I like playing the games with her." When I

asked what kind of games they played she told me "Find words around the room and play fun

word games." This is a great way to get ESL students motivated to do word work. It allows a fun

way to have students engage in working with vocabulary words that might not seem like actual

school work to them.

During my observation Laura did not participate a lot during the reading time, she did not

volunteer to participate a lot, but answered while working with the plants at the table. She was

engaged when it is something hands-on and more entertaining than listening to a story being

read.

Randy: Second Grade ESL Student

Randy is an eight year-old second grader. He is from a Puerto Rican family who do not

speak English. Randy works with Ms. Margaret. Although Randy comes from a Spanish

speaking only home he was able to participate very fluently and did not seem to struggle

answering questions.

During my observation of Randy, I noticed how Ms. Margaret encouraged him to read books with his interests. During his interview I asked Randy what he enjoyed most about working with Ms. Margaret and he responded,

> I like going to Ms. Margaret's room because she reads stuff with me that I like. We get to read about volcanoes, space stuff, and animals. I read a lot more things when I am there. (06/11/14)

Randy's response indicates he values being able to read about things that interest him. He comment also reminds me of the importance of finding out about students' interest as a way to engage them in their learning. Ms. Margaret knows that Randy enjoys the topics that he mentioned so she uses that to get him to read when he visits her classroom for ESL services.

During the lesson I observed, Randy spoke the most of the four students. He answered many of the questions and participated in the discussion frequently. He identified the parts of a plant, he volunteered to read words, and he answered comprehension questions about plants. While I observed on June 12, 2014 Ms. Margaret prompted the students to explain how they could tell if a plant was upside down while looking at a seed that was planted in a plastic bag so the roots were visible. Randy explained that they read in their story about a diagram of a plant and the roots have to be on the bottom of the plant.

I noticed that Randy was able to make connections both to self and text to text. Ms. Margaret told me that it is possible that he may test out of ESL next year if it is determine that he no longer needs ESL services. Through his interview and observation I recognize that working with a student's interest can engage the student and support his growth. As Randy's response

demonstrated, if the student is interested in the topic they will be more likely to want to participate in the lesson.

Jesse: Second Grade ESL Student

Jesse is an eight year-old second grade student. He was born in Puerto Rico but now lives with his mother in the United States. Jesse's teacher told me that academics are very important to his mother. Jesse also works with Ms. Margaret.

During his interview I asked Jesse how Ms. Margaret helps him become a better reader and writer. Jesse responded,

> Ms. Margaret helps me practice my words. After we practice them we can usually
>
> play a game or do something with the words we are learning about like when we
>
> read about ants we got to look at real ants! (06/10/14)

Jesse's response indicates that he values opportunities to practice what he is learning. His response reminds me that when ESL students are engaged in something that is hands-on they have a much bigger interest in it.

During my observation I was able to see the ants that Jesse was talking about. Ms. Margaret bought an ant farm for a previous lesson so the students could see how the ants moved their ant hill. This is another example of an activity in which Ms. Margaret brought what the students read about during the literacy lessons to life. I could see that Jesse was very engaged during the lesson. He was able to identify the parts of a plant after Ms. Margaret had read the story.

Jesse's responses and my observations demonstrated the importance of hands-on ESL learning. If Jesse did not have an actual plant in front of him to identify the parts I wonder how much of that information from the text he would have retained.

Summary

In both classrooms there was a very noticeable feeling of engagement and community. I could tell that the students felt safe in these classrooms. I could tell this because the students participated and had class conversations. This helps to motivate the students to participate during discussions.

Another teaching method that I observed in both ESL teachers' rooms was the use of hands-on manipulatives. Ms. Margaret and Ms. Leslie both mentioned in their interviews the importance of using hands-on learning to engage ESL students and reinforce ideas. Both teachers also used prompting frequently to check for comprehension and keep students actively engaged. The teachers asked questions such as, "what does this page explain?" and "what are the characters doing in the text?" During interviews the teachers also made it very clear that ESL students need vocabulary delivered in a variety of ways. Differentiated ESL literacy instruction through the use of all of these methods ensures that ESL students are receiving quality ESL intervention time. The responses from the students gave clear methods that they find effective. The students' responses made hands-on engagement evident as a technique for effective literacy instruction. The students' responses also made it clear that working with students' interest will help engage them in lessons. The observations and interviews gave me a good understanding of what the ESL teachers and students feel is effective literacy instruction.

Chapter Five: Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations

The purpose of this research study was to determine the best literacy instruction methods for ESL students based on ESL teachers' and ESL students' perceptions. I conducted my research in a suburban school in western New York. The participants were two ESL teachers and four ESL students. I interviewed the teachers and the students to gain insight into their perceptions of effective ESL literacy instruction. I also observed both teachers with the student participants. Then, I interviewed the teacher after the lesson to understand how she felt the lesson went and any final thoughts. Through the use of observations and interviews I gained knowledge into how I can become a more effective literacy teacher to ESL students.

From the findings I presented in chapter four, I am able to draw several conclusions to each of my research questions, consider implications for student learning and my continued development as a teacher, and offer several recommendations for future research. I believe that the findings from this study will help me support Andrea and her ESL peers.

Conclusions

How do teachers who work with English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction?

Teachers' Use of Students' Interests Promotes Student Engagement

The students who I observed during my research study were actively engaged in their lessons. I noticed that the ESL teachers did not have to remind the students to stay on task or repeat directions. I was surprised at how eager the students were to leave their general education class to attend their ESL class. I could tell that the students enjoyed working with their ESL

teacher by their happy demeanor and eagerness to participate in all the activities the teacher had for them.

During the student interviews three students mentioned that they enjoyed going to work with their ESL teacher because they liked the things that they read about during that time. For example, Randy mentioned that he liked to "Read about volcanos and space stuff." Through my interactions with Randy I have found it difficult to keep him on task and engaged during lessons. However, while observing Randy during his time with the ESL teacher I noticed that he stayed on task and remained engaged throughout the entire period. Nickie, another ESL student, even exclaimed during my observation "I love learning about plants!"

Randy, Nickie and their classmates showed great excitement to read and discuss what they were learning about plants during my observation. The combination of Randy's engagement during the plant lesson with Ms. Margaret and his responses to my interview questions lead me to conclude that students become more engaged in reading and literacy instruction when they are engaged with a topic in which they are interested. Randy mentioned during his interview that he likes "learning about plants." This was obvious from his excitement and engagement during the lesson. Lipp and Wheeler (1991) emphasized building ESL instruction with the students' interests, so much that they state it is the only way to engage students in reading instruction.

Teachers' Use of Authentic Literacy Activities Supports Students' English Language Development

Both Ms. Margaret and Ms. Leslie informed me during interviews that they believed that "ESL literacy instruction should come from authentic literacy activities." The teachers explained that this means that "Students should not be receiving word list to memorize new words or vocabulary."

I noticed that the teachers did not use word lists or single word recognition in either lesson I observed. Instead of giving the ESL students a list of words to recognize or learn I have concluded through my observations and my interviews that it is more effective to give ESL students authentic literacy activities. One way that students may become engaged in authentic literacy activities is by prompting the students to recognize possible unknown words in a text. Instead of providing students with a word on its own the ESL teachers stated "It is more effective to have students read a passage or just a sentence that has an unknown word in it." The students will be able to use the context clues from the rest of the text to attempt to decode the word. This is how students will read most words throughout their life. Typically, when student become stuck on a word it is in some form of literature or text they are reading. They are able to use the rest of the sentence or pictures to help them solve this unknown word. Therefore, that is the same manner that teachers should introduce unknown words to ESL students as the ESL teachers I observed did. Ms. Margaret and Ms. Leslie both used a story to engage students in word recognition. During their read aloud they asked students words that they may not recognize to use the context of the story to solve the unknown words.

How do English as a second language students perceive effective literacy instruction?

Teachers' Use of Decoding Strategies Enables Students' Success

Throughout the student interviews I noticed that every student responded similarly to my question about how his/her ESL teacher was helping him/her become a better reader: "She helps me when I don't know a word."

This may seem like a simple method for teachers to use with students, but it is apparent, given the response, that it can be helpful to ESL students, and support them when they are struggling. Based on their responses I can conclude that the four ESL students think that when the teacher helps them decode unfamiliar words they are becoming better reader.

During my observations, I noticed that when a student was struggling with a word the ESL teacher did not immediately tell the student the word. The teacher gave the student time to attempt a decoding strategy on his/her own. After the teacher waited for the student to attempt the word on their own she helped him/her with a variety of methods.

One decoding strategy that I noticed the teachers use was chunking. When a student did not know a word, the ESL teacher would help the student chunk different parts of the word and then encourage the student to try and encouraging him/her to "Sound it out as a whole."

Another method I noticed the teachers use was context clues. For example, Ms. Margaret asked a student to skip the word and "read the rest of the sentence" and then go back to the word. By doing so the student was able to figure out the unknown word. During my interview with Ms. Margaret she stated, "Never assume the students don't know, never assume they do." I believe it is important that the teacher supports the students and reminds them of the strategies that can use to decode words that do not know.   Montelongo, Hernandez, Herter, and Cuello (2011) noted

that ESL students who have a difficult time decoding words reply on context clues to figure out the unknown word.

Teachers Make Learning Fun

Another similar response from the students was that they enjoyed going to work with the ESL teacher because "It is fun." I believe it is very important to make learning fun for the ESL students so that they want to learn, which increases their levels of engagement and participation. Tompkins (2010) emphasized the importance of engagement in literacy activities in her definition of balanced literacy, which she states includes reading and writing, use of oral language, phonics, vocabulary, fluency, comprehension, spelling, grammar, punctuation, content area literacy instruction, student collaboration with peers, and engagement in authentic literacy activities

Through my observations and interviews I can conclude that there are multiple ways teachers can make literacy instruction fun. One method that the students told me they enjoyed was when they "Played reading games." Some games included finding words hidden around the room, computer literacy games, and a variety of word games.

The ESL teachers' responses enable me to conclude that students become more engaged when they are having fun while learning as Ms. Leslie stated "When students are more engaged in learning they participate more." Yang and Chang (2013) discussed the importance of games and fun during instruction time, they stated that games increase levels of engagement and higher levels of thinking.

<center>**Implications for Students**</center>

Use of Hands-on Components Engage Students

      During my interviews with the two teachers they both mentioned that they believe hands-on activities "are vital to help students understand concepts and engage the students." Both lessons I observed contained hands-on elements.

      During her lesson, Ms. Margaret, had plants for the students to use as a manipulative after the finished reading a short text about parts of a plant. Ms. Margaret used the plants to reinforce ideas that were read during the story. For example, she prompted the students to point to the stem, leaves, and roots. This gave students two sources of information for what the terms mean, once in the reading and once with the actual plants. Garza (2014) stated that visuals can be useful for ESL students to gain full comprehension.

      From the observations of and interviews with the ESL teachers I can conclude two benefits of the use of hands-on manipulatives when working with ESL students. The first benefit is that the use of manipulative can be a fun way to engage students in learning. Teachers may not always be able to integrate hands-on manipulatives into or make them applicable to a lesson, therefore when they are used they create a novel and fun way to engage students in the learning process.

      A second benefit is that the use of hands-on materials enables ESL students to interact with a visual and tactile representation of a topic. Greene (1990) stressed the importance of hands-on activities and stated that hands-on activities engage students, extend learning and reinforce concepts. During her interview, Ms. Leslie, shared, "ESL students can often struggle with a mental image of a term that they may know in their language, but not English." Including

<center>46</center>

hands-on components in a lesson can provide ESL students with a visual that they may need in

order to fully understand a concept.

Use of Multiple Sources of Information Support Students' English Language Development

During the interviews with both ESL teachers, they provided an interesting tip for literacy

instruction. The ESL teachers stated that it is important for ESL students to have multiple

sources of information during literacy lessons.

Ms. Margaret stated that, "In order to fully grasp a concept ESL students often need to

see the idea in something other than text." Her use of this strategy was prevalent in my

observation of her class when she used books to read about plants, hands-on manipulatives with

the actual plants, and images of plant parts as part of her instruction. Ms. Leslie used a similar

method during her lesson. She used books that each student read from, white boards that students

used to write their responses on, and images to show pictures from the story.

Ms. Margaret and Ms. Leslie also stated that, "Having conversations with the students

about a topic before teaching it may increase the students' comprehension." Ms. Margaret also

stated that "Showing videos on the given topic may also provide more visuals and addition

descriptions to help the students fully comprehend."

The ESL teachers' responses and my observations of their instruction lead me to

conclude that ESL students need to have multiple sources of information in order to comprehend

a text. Ms. Leslie stated, "ESL students often need to have more than one source of information

because they can struggle to understand something in their second language due to lack of full

understanding." Her statement reminds me that ESL students can understand a topic or idea in

their native language, but may not comprehend it in English. In order to support the students' acquisition of new knowledge the ESL teachers stated that it is important to "give the ESL students multiple ways to interpret the concepts they are working with."

Implications for My Teaching

Create Lessons Using Text, Hands-On Manipulatives, Conversations, and Videos

The information I gathered through the interviews and observations provided me with numerous amounts of new teaching techniques that I can use when I work with ESL students. It is important that I carry these methods into my teaching so I can continue to become a more effective teacher.

While creating literacy lessons for ESL students I need to make sure I incorporate effective literacy instruction approaches into each lesson. While creating lessons I need to make sure that I have authentic texts available for students to read. I also should provide hands-on manipulatives for students as a way to reinforce ideas and keep learning fun. Buck (2000) stated that hands-on manipulatives can help ESL students because they do not need to rely on spoken words only. I can use conversations with ESL students as another form of effective literacy instruction. Ms. Margaret stated, "The conversations that teachers have with their ESL students allows the students to convey knowledge that their language barrier may restrict them from writing." Using video clips can provide visual support and reinforce ideas about topics that may be challenging for ESL students to understand. I can implement all of these strategies and approaches to create effective literacy lessons for my ESL students.

Use Prompting to Check for Understanding and Engage Students

My observations of the ESL teachers revealed the importance of prompting students for understanding. Ms. Leslie and Ms. Margaret both used pausing points or wait time   as the students were reading and discussing.

The teachers also stressed the importance of prompting—specifically the use of questions— as a tool to keep students engaged. Through their use of questions the teachers kept conversations flowing and had all of the students engaged in the conversation. The teachers' use of questions seemed to engage the students and also had them thinking about the concepts under discussion.

It is important that as I continue my work with ESL students that I remember to ask the students questions to engage them in the lesson, and as a way to check their understanding of the topic. Prompting can be a quick and easy way to effectively gauge students understanding. Toni and Parse (2013) point to questioning as one of the most important ways a teacher can engage his/her students in understanding by asking them questions about a concept to encourage deeper thinking and reinforcement.

<div align="center">

Recommendations for Further Research

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Explore Effective ESL Instruction in Science and Social Studies

I think that it is important to look at ESL instruction across all areas of the curriculum and not just from a literacy stance. Although literacy is a majority of ESL teachers' focus ELA can often be integration into other content areas. I believe that it could be beneficial to research how teachers and students perceive effective ESL instruction during science and social studies

lessons through observations and interviews. These two content areas could be compared to the

research on effective literacy instruction with ESL students to determine what, if any similarities

and differences exist among the three curricular areas. The interviews and observation findings

from this study could be compared to the findings of the content area study to determine if the

same teaching methods are relevant in both studies.

Research School Administrators' Beliefs about ESL Support Services

I believe another interesting possible research topic could be for me to look at ESL

support services from an administrative stance. A study on the support services that

administrations believe schools and teachers should provide to ESL students could reveal

interesting insights. Researching perspectives about ESL support from a teacher's point of view

and from an administrator's point of view could be beneficial to compare through the use of

interviews. The results of such an interview study may be help schools become more effective in

the types of ESL support services they provide.

Final Thoughts

The purpose of this research study was to explore effective ESL literacy instruction from

ESL students' and teachers' perspectives. As an elementary teacher in a school district with a

high percentage of ESL students, I recognize that it is important that I do all I can to support the

needs of all students, but in particular those for whom English is a second language. I believe

that through the course of conducting this study I have discovered new teaching methods and

strategies that will enable me to provide more effective literacy instruction for Andrea and my other ESL students.

I have learned that my literacy lessons must involve authentic literacy opportunities, include hands-on learning experiences and be fun and engaging for my students. I also learned that it is effective to engage students through multiple sources. I believe that my interviews and observations have made me more in tune with my students and my colleagues. I anticipate that the findings from my research will not only benefit me, but it is also my future students.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol-Teacher

Participant: (pseudonym) _____

Date of Interview and Time: _____

<u>Purpose Statement</u>: *Start audio-recording- Identifying participant by pseudonym, the date, and time*

I want to interview you to find out what you think about effective ESL teaching methods. I am going to ask you some questions. Please be honest, and share all of your thoughts openly. These are open ended questions. . Your responses will help me build my understanding of ESL teaching. You may stop doing the interview at any time and you also do not need to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with. Our interview will last about 15 minutes. If you have given consent I will be recording this interview.

<u>Before the observations:</u>

1. What do you believe are the most effective literacy teaching methods for ESL instruction? Why?
2. What do you do to help ESL students build vocabulary?
3. What materials do you use most often with your students?
4. What do you think classroom teachers can do to support ESL students during ELA lessons?
5. What modifications do you use for ESL students during ELA lessons?

<u>After the observations:</u>

1. What do you think went well during this lesson?
2. What do you think was challenging during this lesson?
3. What would you change if you could?
4. What advice do you have for beginning teachers who are working with ESL students?

<u>Closing</u>: I truly appreciate your participation and willingness to participate in this study. As indicated in your consent letter, your identity will be kept confidential.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol-Student

Participant: (pseudonym) _____

Date of Interview and Time: _____

Purpose Statement: *Start audio-recording- Identifying participant by pseudonym, the date, and time*

I would like to interview you to find out what you think about ESL teaching. I am going to ask you some questions and I want you to answer them the best you can. Please be honest, and share all of your thoughts openly. These are open ended questions and there are no correct or incorrect answers. Your responses will help me build my teaching repertoire. You may stop doing the interview at any time and you also do not need to answer any questions you feel uncomfortable with. Our interview will last about 15 minutes. If you and your parent/guardian have given consent I will be recording this interview.

Before the observation:

1. How is your ESL teacher (might use the teacher's real name here.) helping you become a better reader?
2. How is your ESL teacher (might use the teacher's real name here) helping you become a better writer?
3. What do you most enjoy about working with your ESL teacher (might use the teacher's real name here)
4. What might your ESL teacher (might use the teacher's real name here) do to help you become a better reader?
5. What might your ESL teacher (might use the teacher's real name here) do to help you become a better writer?

Closing: I truly appreciate your participation and willingness to participate in this study. As indicated in your consent letter, your identity will be kept confidential.