Methods for Teaching Vocabulary Instruction to English Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

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Abstract

This capstone project aims to support teachers who work with English language learners (ELLs) in mainstream classrooms. ELLs are a growing population and it is likely that teachers will have one or more ELLs in their class. A problem found with teaching of ELLs is that teachers do not feel that they receive the training and tools to do so. To ensure that teachers feel equipped to teach English language learners, this capstone project introduces scaffolding as a solution through the lens of Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development. Solutions to the problem are introduced through the concept that instruction of vocabulary leads to reading comprehension, and then in turn, leads to success across content areas. The research delves into the importance of strategy teaching when working with ELLs and the many methods that teachers can utilize within their own instruction.

Keywords: English language learners, scaffolding, professional development, vocabulary
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Chapter 1: Introduction

According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, English language learners, also known as (ELLs) are the fastest-growing student population across the United States and the population more than doubled between the years 1989-2006 (NCELA, 2006). Indeed, teachers are placed with many diverse students each year, ELLs included. Teachers are expected to support these diverse students by setting goals and high expectations for learning in order for ELLs to be successful (Pettit, 2011). In order for teachers to ensure that their students are meeting standards, they need to not only set clear objectives but provide students with strategies and differentiation to support diverse learning needs. This means, teachers need to be given the professional development and tools that can set the stage for instruction of ELLs. The problem at hand is that teachers have not been provided with the professional training and resources to teach English language learners (Oliveira & Shoffner, 2016). This problem is significant because there are students who are missing out on learning opportunities due to teachers not being able to provide the support to meet their individual learning needs. In addition, teachers are evaluated by their performance of instruction, and if they are not given the tools and training to differentiate for ELLs, that evaluation is inequitable. Without giving teachers the training and tools to support ELLs, they will not be able to reach their full potential. Looking through a lens of Vygotsky’s (1978) theory, the Zone of Proximal Development, we can notice how with the guidance and support of an individual during the learning process, students can surpass their independent ability, allowing them to absorb more content.

The ELL population is to be held to the same state standards as everyone else. First, in No Child Left Behind, schools were held accountable for how each student learns with little
flexibility for states to set their own goals (Lee, 2021). Later, in 2015, former President Obama passed the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which also holds schools accountable for student achievement. ESSA allows for state flexibility in providing goals for student achievement within a framework designed by the federal government (Lee, 2021). For teachers to be held accountable for student learning, they need to have the foundation for implementing meaningful instruction to English language learners.

Teachers can support English language learners through providing scaffolds when teaching vocabulary. Vocabulary is paramount to ELLs in improving their learning, yet not prioritized even after 100 years of research. It is crucial that ELLs are given vocabulary instruction and strategies, and having the knowledge of more words leads to further reading comprehension (Brandes, D. R., & McMaster, K. L., 2017). If ELLs are given the strategies to break down the meaning of words and expand their knowledge of academic words, they will be able to manipulate words when writing and reading, bringing more understanding to the content they are learning. Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development provides teachers with a lens that students, when guided through instruction, will be able to achieve far past their independent ability. If we give teachers the training and tools to provide students with effective vocabulary methods, ELLs will be able to comprehend what they are learning and reach achievement.

Thus, the purpose of this capstone project is to inform teachers of a present problem with English language learners and then grant them with a solution to improve their own teaching methods. Providing teachers with a theoretical framework for looking at a possible solution to the present problem, will give teachers preservation in the teaching of ELLs. In Chapter 2, I will delve into the theory and research that have weighed in on this problem and solutions. In Chapter
3. I will discuss the product which can potentially provide teachers with strategies discussed within my research.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review examines the persistent problem occurring in mainstream classrooms today surrounding English Language Learners. While English Language Learners continue to flood classrooms, teachers lack adequate training or professional development to ensure every student’s success. Furthermore, students who possess different learning needs require modification so that they appropriately meet rigorous standards. The following research delves into the common gaps in the education system regarding teaching ELLs and proposes proven techniques designed for classrooms with English language learners. In addition, fundamental research specifies essential vocabulary instruction and methods in the context of English language learners. These strategies provide a foundation for ELLs to comprehend and apply new vocabulary across disciplines successfully.

Although it depends on the school district’s location, some counties may encompass a larger population of ELLs than a neighboring district. Nevertheless, there is a country-wide increase in ELLs entering U.S. schools with a wide range of cultural backgrounds and life experiences, all with their own unique educational needs and goals. As Nan Li (2016) demonstrates in his book, *Teaching ELLs Across Content Areas: Issues and Strategies*, “Some ELLs may live in their cultural community while other ELLs may live in a non-ELL environment; some ELL families may live in the United States for over a generation while others may be newcomers; some ELLs can be high achievers while others can be struggling readers” (p. 5). Since there is such a wide range to which ELLs come from and what they know, teachers require training that encompasses using these methods and strategies to set those students up for success.
According to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition (also known as the NCELA), English language learners are the fastest-growing student population across the United States. The ELL population more than doubled between the years 1989-2006 (NCELA, 2006). The population of ELLs has reached 5.3 million in 2010 based on the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2012) and has increased 29.7% since 2000 (Li, 2016). According to Li (2016), it is likely that teachers of ELLs will teach in communities made up of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and that teachers must be competent to teach them. In comparison to the general school population, the ELL school enrollment has increased rapidly (Li, 2016). With this in mind, how to educate ELLs effectively becomes a challenge for K-12 teachers. More ELLs enter our schools each year, and teachers struggle to approach students who are not native English speakers due to a lack of training that prepares teachers to accommodate ELLs. In Oliveira and Shoffner’s book, *Teaching English Language Arts to English Language Learners: Preparing Pre-Service and in-service Teachers* (2016), they state how most teacher education programs, across both grade levels and content areas, do not correctly prepare teachers with the knowledge of specific methods on how to teach ELLs. Teachers lack the skills and tools to work with ELLs because their training fails to provide adequate preparation and professional development. Throughout this literature review, anyone can see that Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development can be a tool in preparing teachers to work with English language learners through scaffolding and support of strategy teaching.

**Theoretical Framework**

Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the *Zone of Proximal Development* is a lens by which to look at the research supporting ELLs. Vygotsky’s (1978) theory, “Zone of Proximal
“Zone of Proximal Development,” also known as ZPD, is a term he used to characterize the mental development of an individual. He defines this as the distance between the actual developmental level of an individual by solving problems independently and the level of potential development through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with other peers (Vygotsky, 1978). In other words, ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help or scaffolding and what the learner can do with such assistance from a skilled individual or when working with others. The term proximal refers to the skills that the learner is close to achieving. Below (Figure 1) is a picture that depicts where the Zone of Proximal Development (1978) lies and how it represents a learner becoming closer to achieving what they could not do independently.

**Figure 1**

*Zone of Proximal Development*

Note. Light blue ring represents what the learners cannot do. Medium blue ring represents the zone of proximal development. Dark blue ring represents what the learner can do unaided.
Vygotsky’s (1978) theory states that learners are capable of much more when receiving support from an adult. In Pauline Gibbons (2015) book, *Scaffolding Language, Scaffolding Learning: Teaching English Language Learners in the Mainstream Classroom*, she provides a clear example of ZPD when she states,

> Anyone who has been involved with young children is familiar with what this looks like in practice. When children are learning to feed or dress themselves, the adult at first has to perform the whole activity. Then the child gradually performs parts of the activity, with the parent still assisting with the more difficult parts. Finally, the child is able to do the whole thing unaided. In other words, successful coordination with a partner--or assisted performance--leads learners to reach beyond what they are able to achieve alone, to participate in new situations and to tackle new tasks, or, in the case of second language learners, to learn new ways of using language (p. 13-14).

English language learners are capable of achieving success in the classroom when given the aid from a trained individual and shown strategies and techniques that are first modeled by the teacher.

Using strategies and scaffolding techniques that can build on students’ prior knowledge and experiences will progress more. Putting this theory into practice with all students will allow teachers to enhance ELLs learning. Addressing the current problem of teachers who may feel that they are unfit to teach English language learners because they require professional development and tools, Vygotsky’s (1978) theory solves this problem. Providing scaffolds for ELLs within instruction will allow teachers to be more successful.

**Why This Is a Problem**
On December 10, 2015, former President Obama passed the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, also known as ESSA. *Like No Child Left Behind*, this act states that all students should receive a high academic standard to prepare them for success (ESSA, 2015). It’s important to emphasize “every” student; this includes students with disabilities and students from a non-English speaking home. If we expect teachers to prepare students to become successful, not having the professional development to work with ELLs hinders teachers from accomplishing their goals.

Teachers need to understand the basic terminologies related to English language learners and be able to distinguish truth from some misconceptions (Li, 2016). When teachers cannot understand and work with ELLs, they can often mistake them for having learning disabilities when it might be that there is a language barrier present. For example, if a student has difficulty with written language, the teacher may misinterpret that the student’s fluency in spoken language indicates general fluency in the academic language (Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015). For ELLs to become successful academically, teachers’ perceptions must be clear and hold positive beliefs towards their students, and set high expectations for them (Pettit, 2011). Teachers can set these high expectations by working with students closely through scaffolded instruction and seeing that they meet those expectations. Working closely with students and applying strategies that scaffold their learning will allow teachers to receive more insight into their students and better differentiate lessons.

**Strategies for Teaching ELLs**

For ELLs to succeed in content areas, such as science, social studies, math, reading, and writing, they need to know strategies to help with comprehension. Like Li (2016) states in his book, *Teaching ELLs Across Content Areas: Issues and Strategies,*
The acquisition of knowledge and skills in math, science, social studies, and the visual and performing arts is dependent on proficiency in oral language, reading, and writing, and particularly on the ability to use academic language in these areas. In order for ELLs to succeed academically, they need to learn content and the English language skills needed to learn that content at the same time. (p. 50).

We can conclude that to tap into the knowledge of other content areas, learners must first be proficient in oral language, reading, and writing and understand academic language such as the definitions utilized in learning other subjects. If they can achieve academic language, they will think more critically and put into practice problem-solving skills.

More tactics are necessary for teachers to implement in their instruction to accommodate ELLs in their academic goals. While many common strategies already in place are appropriate for ELLs, such as peer engagement, visualizing, inferring, synthesizing, and summarizing, these do require modification and additional scaffolding for ELLs to utilize these strategies independently. Li (2016) discusses the different techniques that will allow teachers to differentiate instruction for ELLs in his book. Li (2016) goes further to specify vocabulary strategies and their importance for ELLs. Strategy teaching helps the students’ Zone of Proximal Development because it provides students with scaffolded learning where the teachers allow students to be led through new academic language and begin to apply learned skills independently.

One of those common strategies, Direct Vocabulary Instruction, is crucial in introducing a new topic or chapter across disciplines. However, ELLs require more exposure to new words, phrases, and terms. Therefore, Li (2016) emphasizes repetition when using Direct Vocabulary Instruction. An important step to add is to inquire what ELLs already know about the topic or
content area. Using prior knowledge to build upon, Li (2016) says, allows ELLs to make more robust associations. In addition, ELLs require more repetition when learning new vocabulary. To increase exposure, Li (2016) suggests practices such as Word Walls in all grade levels. Using Word Walls will provide a scaffold by being a visual that students can reference at any given time and expose them to new words. Finally, optimizing the classroom space for ELLs allows access to helpful tools daily, making repetition and memorization easier. Optimizing classroom space can entail designated stations in the classroom that provide students with tools that support their learning.

Collaborative Group Work has the potential to improve ELLs’ learning drastically. Li (2016) explains that lecture-style teaching excludes ELLs, making it more difficult to reinstate concepts or ask questions. Direct engagement in small groups allows ELLs to become comfortable enough to ask questions and interact with peers to solidify ideas. When group work is well-designed, it offers many affordances for English language learners such as giving them the chance to interact with other speakers, and therefore the amount of language they use is increased (Gibbons, 2015). Vocabulary games or exercises played in small groups are ideal in having ELLs engage in the content while feeling comfortable enough to question what they do not understand without the social pressures of the entire classroom in lecture. ELLs who are not confident in English often feel more comfortable working with their classmates than performing in a whole-class situation (Gibbons, 2015). Collaborative group work involves students working together, whether it is through pair work activities which involves discussion (Gibbons, 2015). Students working collaboratively supports Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of ZPD because as Gibbons (2015) states, “children working together can do more collaboratively than they can
individually” (p. 50). This statement explains how students can go past their independent ability when working with others.

The strategy to use last, Li (2016) suggests, is application. Mnemonic Instruction asks students to create words, sentences, or pictures to remember the meaning of new vocabulary words. Because these are unique to each student, they are more likely to maintain a strong association in their memory. For ELLs, Li (2016) suggests that students create analogies that apply the vocabulary words in personal ways—making these connections allow ELLs to reinforce new information within their unique framework, making the vocabulary more retainable.

According to an empirical study, *Effects of Mnemonic and Prior Knowledge Instructional Strategies on Students' Achievement in Mathematics* by Mojeeb Kolawole Akinsola and Ezekiel Olukola Odeyemi, it has been proven that Mnemonic instruction is effective in improving students performance in mathematics (Akinsola & Odeyemi, 2014). Akinsola and Odeyemi (2014) state, “Mnemonic instruction links new information to prior knowledge through the use of visual or acrostic cues. Visual cues are pictures or graphics teachers create that link the old and new information in the student’s memory (p. 678). We see that using Mnemonic instruction makes it easier for students to associate their learning to the concepts or ideas they understand. In another empirical study done by Avila and Sadoski (1996), *Exploring New Applications of the Keyword Method to Acquire English Vocabulary*, the mnemonic technique shows improved immediate and long-term retention of vocabulary. This study explains how the mnemonic technique enhanced students’ memory of word definitions (Avila & Sadoski, 1996).

**Vocabulary Knowledge Leads to Reading Comprehension**
According to Carlo et al. (2004), for students to access the information taught in middle and secondary content area classes, children must exit elementary school with good reading comprehension. In addition, success on tests is mandatory for promotion and graduation, so without access to grade-appropriate content knowledge, it is unlikely for promotion and graduation to be possible. The problem is that very few researchers have developed appropriate programs to improve English language learners’ vocabulary, leading to comprehension issues. This is something that needs to be explored in future research. Researchers need to look at the programs that are being used specifically to teach ELLs and observe their effectiveness in supporting English language learners with comprehension. This is something that is lacking in research when it comes to vocabulary instruction.

Some ELLs are immigrants and some are born in the United States living in households where English is not spoken where ELLs may have English as their dominant language, but may not have developed the academic skills and vocabulary needed to be successful in an English speaking classroom (Li, 2016). When students receive proper strategies to learn vocabulary they will be well suited to break down the meaning of words when reading. Students who know more academic words can be strategic while reading, and students who can manipulate language will be more successful in learning (Sweet & Snow, 2004). As students expand their vocabulary of academic words, they will comprehend more of what they read and generate inferences that allow them to think more critically.

Brandes et al. (2017) stated that vocabulary knowledge is paramount in improving ELL learning and is evident in over 100 years of research. Still, it is not being prioritized in the curriculum. We must prioritize vocabulary, first and foremost, when teaching ELLs. We see this when we consider that vocabulary knowledge leads to reading comprehension. The relation
between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension can be reciprocal, such that as students learn more words, their comprehension is better facilitated; hence, successful comprehension may lead to increased opportunities for learning new words and wider reading (Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010; Stanovich, 1986). Developing English vocabulary knowledge is a necessity when implementing a more complex academic approach to instructing ELLs. ELLs development of English literacy relies on establishing sufficient vocabulary knowledge as they are going through their education. Since vocabulary knowledge is related to proficiency in reading, it is necessary for reading comprehension. Low vocabulary knowledge is the main reason for comprehension interference (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). To develop inferencing skills necessary for English reading comprehension, they need to have the foundation of vocabulary knowledge.

In Lesaux et al.’s 2010 study, *The Effectiveness and Ease of Implementation of an Academic Vocabulary Intervention for Linguistically Diverse Students in Urban Middle Schools*, three research questions were stated to generate new insights related to vocabulary instruction by evaluating the effects of a vocabulary program for use in low performing middle schools with high numbers of language minority learners. The research questions were;

1. What is the impact of an academic vocabulary program on the vocabulary and reading comprehension of language minority learners and their native English speaker classmates enrolled in urban middle schools?

2. With what level of fidelity was the program implemented and what do teachers report about ease of implementation?

3. In what ways did the instruction as implemented contrast with standard practice?

(Lesaux et al., 2010, p. 200).
This intervention program was referred to as Academic Language Instruction for All Students (ALIAS) which was text-based, developed for use in low-performing mainstream English language arts classrooms with a high number of language minority learners. The study included 476 sixth grade students where 346 of them were language minority students and 130 native English speakers. The intervention program, ALIAS, was 18 weeks in length, featuring 8 two-week units. Each lesson was designed to consist of 45 minutes where the lesson would begin with a short piece of informational text and then opportunities available for teaching academic vocabulary. For each lesson, 8-9 academic vocabulary words were chosen (Lesaux et al., 2010). The program had teachers implement more explicit vocabulary instruction throughout lessons. The results of this study was that the program did provide short-term effects of measure of reading comprehension in relation to vocabulary. However, it was noted that such vocabulary instruction needs to be addressed in the upper elementary grades (Lesaux et al., 2010).

Implementing vocabulary strategies is evident in student learning.

**Supplying Vocabulary Instruction Through the Use of Teaching Strategies**

Supplying vocabulary instruction for ELLs is essential and can be attained by proper training and professional development. Attaining vocabulary can happen through many teaching approaches, such as the act of oral storytelling. Brandes et al. (2017) discuss how word exposure during oral storytelling is crucial in the early grades because students have not yet learned to read independently. As students’ reading skills improve, they shift to independent reading and figure out the meaning of words through context clues. As students read more, their exposure to unknown words increases, and students build their vocabulary knowledge. Students also begin to make connections with their life experiences. Although students may use many strategies to figure out unknown words, they still require teaching vocabulary instruction. Teachers should
select words that may be harder to figure out and expose students through direct instruction (Brandes & McMaster, 2017). For example, before teaching a content lesson, teachers can select complex words mentioned in the lesson and supply students with a vocabulary preview. Such methods can be done by directly informing students of the word's definition and providing a visual or context to go along with the word.

Teachers need to teach vocabulary, but they also need to teach strategies that help students find the meanings of words on their own. As important as it is to teach the meanings of complex vocabulary directly, it is also crucial to provide students with strategies on how to break down the meaning of a word on their own. Brandes & McMaster (2017) state,

Strategies are broadly defined as procedures for completing academic tasks that enable students to learn or solve problems independently; in essence, strategy instruction involves teaching students how to learn or perform a task as opposed to teaching specific content (Pressley & Harris, 1990; Schumaker & Deshler, 1984). These procedures are explicitly taught to students, including how and when they should be applied; thereafter, control in implementing the strategy is transferred to the student (Deshler, Alley, Warner, & Schumaker, 1981). In the case of word learning, vocabulary strategies are a potentially powerful approach to broadening the contexts in which ELLs learn new words, provided that students can read somewhat independently and identify unknown words (p. 56). When teachers design curricula to teach students vocabulary strategies, they will utilize these strategies independently and require less scaffolding as they progress. In order for students to utilize these strategies independently, teachers need to first scaffold students by teaching them both direct vocabulary instruction and vocabulary strategies.

Methods for Vocabulary Instruction
According to Dong (2013), teaching vocabulary is to activate students' prior knowledge. “Activating students’ prior knowledge (i.e., the knowledge and skills a learner brings to a learning task) is a well-researched and field-tested vocabulary teaching strategy (Ausubel 1968; Rupley and Slough 2010)” (p. 52). One way to activate prior knowledge is to survey students. Another way Dong (2013) discusses this is to communicate with other teachers who specialize in ELLs, find out the students’ backgrounds, and seek guidance from those teachers. He also recommends inviting students to either write or discuss the topic before teaching the lesson. Ask them questions like; What do you know about...?, What comes to mind when you hear...?, How do you translate this in your native language?, etc (Dong, 2013). Surveying students ties into Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development because when a teacher activates students’ prior knowledge first and conferencing with them, they provide that scaffold.

In the article, Using Sentence Frames to Develop Academic Vocabulary for English Learners written by Whitney Bray Donnelly and Christopher J. Roe (2010), they discuss methods for using sentence frames to scaffold vocabulary instruction.

To develop sentence frames, first write sentences that express the target language function (e.g., compare/contrast), then replace target vocabulary with blanks, and finally, create a word bank or a list of the words that were eliminated from the original sentences. The resulting materials are sets of sentence frames with fill-in spaces that are appropriate for different language levels and a word bank. Lower-level frames are less complex than higher-level frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010, p. 132).

A sentence frame is created by the teacher and works as a scaffold for students trying to recall the definitions they previously learned. For example, you are providing students with a word bank and then a frame that will prompt the student of which word should be placed in the blank.
Sentence frames provide differentiation to ELLs because it acts as a guide. Sentence frames can be made more complex by adding more blanks or expanding the sentence.

Teaching can be very challenging, and students need instruction on using comprehension strategies, vocabulary and learning English (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). For English learners to be successful with complex academic tasks, they need to have an academic language in both their home language and the English language. Rich vocabulary instruction must occur throughout the curriculum, but it can be a difficult task for teachers. In addition, it can be a difficult task because most ELLs in our classroom come to us with widely different language levels (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). Providing scaffolds for vocabulary learning allows teachers to accommodate their ELLs and make the language more accessible.

Donnelly and Roe (2010) discuss English Language Development, also known as ELD, and how they have noticed a tendency for classroom teachers to often see ELD as a separate instructional activity instead of infusing it with the core subjects. They believe that ELD should be implemented both separately and intertwined with the core subjects. With research on infusing ELD instruction into core subjects, Donnelly and Roe (2010) have found that Wiggins and McTighe’s (2005) Backward Planning is the first step. In backward design, Wiggins and McTighe (2005) state how a teacher’s lessons, units, and courses should be inferred from the results we are looking to get. Therefore, before creating a lesson, teachers set the language and learning objectives for their English language learners and plan accordingly so that the lesson leads to them achieving the objective successfully. Teachers can scaffold ELLs to ensure that they meet the objective.

As a part of Project EXCELL (EXceptional Collaboration for English Language Learning), Linda New Levine, Laura Lukens, and Betty Ansin Smallwood (2007) created *The
GO TO Strategies: Scaffolding Options for Teachers of English Language Learners, K-12. In this anthology, Levine, Lukens, and Smallwood (2007) present their inventory of methods developed in their research to teach ELLs better. Section IV explains specific strategies to highlight their unique approach in filling a particular gap in ELLs’ education. The following procedures by Levine, Lukens, and Smallwood (2007) provide the additional steps required to better introduce and reiterate vocabulary lessons:

1. Contextualize Language: This method aims to increase comprehension of oral language input and can be utilized in both whole-class instruction and small groups. The teacher exhibits visuals, gestures, facial expressions, body language, illustrations, maps, graphs, timelines, diagrams, and manipulatives for this strategy when introducing a new vocabulary word or event. From this, the student infers meaning from the context provided.

2. K-W-L Charts: This method activates the students’ prior knowledge to anticipate them and confirm future learning. If the teacher instructs the entire class, they will create a chart with the columns: What I KNOW, What I WANT to Know, and What I LEARNED. Once the teacher questions the students on what they already know about the new topic, they will fill out responses in the first column, “K” for what they know. Next, the teacher will inquire what students want to find out about this new topic and assist the class in generating questions. These responses will be in the second column, “W.” During the lesson, the teacher will refer back to the chart as the content in the first two columns is mentioned. When the unit is complete, the teacher will return to the chart to ask students what they have learned to fill out the final “L” column, which teaches students to
summarize what they have learned. This exercise is equally successful when done individually on a worksheet or in small groups.

3. **Key Sentence Frames:** This exercise teaches how to utilize and structure academic language. Here, the teacher provides common academic sentences or phrases with blanks, such as:

   a. ____ is similar to ____ in that they both ____.

   b. The characteristics of ___ can include ____, _____, and ____.

Here, the teacher provides a word bank (or, for younger students, a picture bank) to fill out the blanks. This application allows oral vocabulary utilization and written academic language.

4. **Model Academic Language:** This strategy teaches academic language structures and vocabulary through modeling the language orally required by the lesson. This is achieved by writing the target language on the board, then pointing to the word as spoken or referenced. The students then comprehend, internalize, and read the language and vocabulary words that are repeated and modeled.

Levine, Lukens, and Smallwood (2007) recommend these strategies for teaching ELLs due to these practices allowing students to make solid and repetitive associations. While most, if not all, of these strategies, can be taught to the entire classroom and are equally beneficial to all students, ELLs see more success in vocabulary retention and comprehension when these methods are commonplace in the classroom throughout all subjects and units. These methods also present an opportunity to be modified for one-on-one learning or small group learning, should the students require additional help.

**Conclusion**
This literature review has improved my understanding of how many teachers are ill-equipped to teach English language learners and that there is a solution to this problem if we consider Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development. There are many solutions to this current problem but understanding the theory of ZPD, which delivers the idea that individuals can learn past their independent ability when they receive guidance from another individual, is one solution for teachers to consider. If teachers can provide guidance and create scaffolds for their English language learners, they will become more equipped to teach them. Therefore, teachers need professional development on how to accommodate ELLs in their instruction. Throughout this research, I have come across many methods that will help teachers improve their instruction on teaching vocabulary to help ELLs with comprehension across all content areas. In searching for literature to complete this review, limited research was found on understanding the specifics of teacher input of their own struggles teaching English language learners in mainstream classrooms due to lack of professional development. This means that the implications for future research include studying K-12 teachers that work with ELLs that do not hold an ESL certification, professional development offered at districts to support ELLs, and the funding available to schools to support teachers who work with ELLs. This would be helpful in understanding the problem and making it a prioritized issue to address. Within the research that I have found to complete this review, I will go on in Chapter 3 to discuss the professional development product that will provide one of many solutions to solving the problem. Chapter 3 will thoroughly explain what best strategies to implement when teaching vocabulary to English language learners in mainstream classrooms.
Chapter 3: Description of the Product and Tools

In this chapter, I present a professional development plan that will address teachers lacking adequate training in teaching English language learners. This professional development will be in the format of a webinar (Appendix A) where teachers and other staff can publicly access it. The video will consist of 37 minutes and include links to tools that teachers can use to implement the strategies included in this professional development. Educators will be able to walk away with the necessary strategies to support the ELLs within their classrooms.

ELLs come to our classrooms with their knowledge and are capable of being successful with the scaffolding that teachers can provide through strategy teaching. In Vygotsky’s (1934) theory, the Zone of Proximal Development, we can see that ELLs can learn and progress successfully if given the guidance and support from a trained individual. ZPD is the difference between what a learner can do without the help of a teacher or other individual and what the learner can do with the help of a teacher or other individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Knowing this makes it possible for teachers to set high expectations for all their students and see that scaffolding will help them become successful. All the strategies that will be presented in this professional development are strategies that are taught through scaffolded instruction.

The main focus of each strategy that will be addressed is how teachers can teach vocabulary to English language learners in a way that is both effective and gives students the opportunity to learn to do things independently. It is evident that vocabulary ranks high importance as having vocabulary skills leads to comprehension. Students who are taught more academic words can be strategic when reading information across other content areas (Sweet & Snow, 2004). Stated in the professional development product, the solution trickles down to how vocabulary leads to comprehension and comprehension leads to success. Students must learn
strategies to support them through academic vocabulary so that when they are learning, they are getting a deep understanding of the content. ELLs are already just trying to learn the English language and then, on top of that, the English academic language. Setting the foundation for ELLs to learn the language to make sense to them will help them comprehend complex ideas. For ELLs to access the academic vocabulary and ideas taught in middle and secondary content areas, they need to leave elementary school with good reading comprehension (Carlo et al. 2004). How do we ensure that students have the reading comprehension skills to succeed? We give them scaffolded instruction in teaching them ways they can infer and understand the meaning of words.

This professional development product solves the problem of teachers inadequately trained in teaching ELLs within their classrooms because it gives them tools and ideas to use in implementing their instruction. Teaching vocabulary strategies and discussing Vygotsky’s (1934) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development solves this problem because it is clear that comprehension of content is the key to understanding concepts. Everything links to comprehension. If students cannot understand the words they are taught when reading, they will not think critically about the content and expand their knowledge. As implied by Brandes and McMaster (2017), lacking knowledge of vocabulary is found to be one of the main reasons for comprehension interference. Vygotsky’s theory of ZPD gives us the idea that students can learn when presented with high-quality teachers who provide them with scaffolded instruction. If teachers receive the professional development of ways they can differentiate instruction for ELLs in their classroom, we will see that more ELLs will be successful in comprehending what they are learning.
This professional development product begins with an overview of what teachers will attain from this training. Teachers will become aware of the current problem discussed and addressed involving working with English language learners, teachers will learn ways that this problem can be solved, they will become aware of teaching strategies that they can use within their instruction, and lastly, they will be allowed to observe helpful tools to implement such strategies. The professional development will follow with an agenda of what the training will consist of in sections.

This professional development intends to give teachers strategies that are successful in teaching ELLs and make them more confident in teaching them. From my own experience in the school I work in, I have seen too many teachers overwhelmed finding ways to differentiate lessons for their ELLs. There are many ways in which teachers will be able to implement these methods within their teaching.

The professional development is organized in sections that are independent of each other. First, the video will address the current problem and discuss using evidence found in research. To follow, the theoretical framework on how Len Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development helps us understand how scaffolded instruction is effective. Then the video will explain how teachers can consider this theory to address how teachers are ill-equipped to teach English language learners. Lastly, the professional development is broken up into different vocabulary strategies that teachers can use to differentiate instruction. Each strategy will be presented with a description of what it is, why the strategy is essential, a rationale for using the strategy, and how to implement it.

The following is a preview of what will be discussed within professional development.

**Introduction to the Problem**
Many teachers have not been given the professional development or training to work with English language learners properly. Teachers are held to high expectations for their students’ success but not given the tools. We need to ask ourselves why this is a problem. As presented in the literature review, the population of ELLs has reached 5.3 million in 2010 (NCES, 2012) and has increased 29.7% since 2000 (Li, 2016). A lot of the students we teach are ELLs or were previously ELLs. These statistics are important to consider because we need to be aware of who our students are and what best practices to use when teaching them. In this part of professional development, you need to consider how well you know your students and where they came from. Being aware of who your students are is the first step in knowing how you will modify your lessons.

**The Solution to the Problem**

The solution presented is to use Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of ZPD as a lens for teaching ELLs. Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the *Zone of Proximal Development* explains how a learner has more potential when given the support by another individual. This supports how working with students and teaching them strategies can help them become successful. Teachers can consider this theory when implementing a solution to teaching their ELLs. The professional development discusses how teaching vocabulary strategies to ELLs can guide them to success.

**Importance of Strategy Teaching**

Strategy teaching gives students the access to take control of their learning. When given the appropriate strategies for learning vocabulary, students will be able to comprehend what they are reading or learning independently. They will begin to understand unknown words and make inferences on the meaning of words. The meaning of vocabulary words is even taught indirectly through word exposure. In all grades, the act of story-telling introduces students to new words.
and allows them to make connections and inferences. As they are exposed to more words, they are able to comprehend more on their own. Teaching students ways to learn new words, gives them the autonomy to figure out meanings and interpretations on their own.

**Collaborative Group Work**

Li (2016) explains how lecture style teaching excludes ELLs and that cooperative learning is the way to go. When students work in small groups, they have the opportunity to connect their ideas with others and participate in discussions. They also may feel more comfortable sharing their ideas in a small group setting. Discussions will lead to more language use and also misinterpretations of the text. If a student does not understand something that is being taught, they can confide in their peers to express what is being said. Included as a tool for cooperative learning in the Tool Box, I have provided a video link titled, *Tips for Teaching English Learners Video Series: Using Turn and Talk to Encourage ELLs* which shows you how to have an effective turn and talk within your classroom. Collaborative group work also can involve interactive learning experiences such as games that get students engaged. In this professional development product, there is an online tool provided in the Tool Box. This tool is a website titled, *10 Vocabulary Games for the Engaged Elementary Classroom* and it includes games that students can play cooperatively when learning vocabulary terms. I have included an example of one of the games within the training. The rationale for using Collaborative group work is that students learn so much from working with others. Gibbons (2015) states that group work may have positive affective consequences such as feeling more comfortable participating by asking questions and discussing their ideas.

**Mnemonic Instruction**
Mnemonic instruction allows students to be creative in ways that they learn new words. In Mnemonic instruction, the teacher teaches students a new vocabulary word supplying its definition. The student has the option to take that word and either draw a picture, create a sentence, create another word, or do something else creative that will help them remember the word’s definition. In an empirical study by Avila and Sadoski (1996) *Exploring New Applications of the Keyword Method to Acquire English Vocabulary*, the mnemonic technique was shown to improve retention of vocabulary within both immediate and long-term. Making word associations helps them remember the meaning of words and in this way, they are taking charge of their own learning. This is important because it gives students choices about methods that work best for them. The rationale for using Mnemonic instruction is that students learn better when they are using a strategy that works best for them. As Li (2016) suggested, when students create their own analogies for words, it becomes more personal and allows them to make connections using their own unique framework.

**Prior Knowledge and K-W-L Charts**

Activating prior knowledge is something that should be done before any lesson is taught. Prior knowledge allows students to incorporate meaning to newly learned material (Akinsola & Odeyemi, 2014). In order for teachers to be effective, they need to understand what their students already know. This also gives students the opportunity to think deeper about a topic and make associations and connections to a topic. Located in the Tool Box in the professional development is a video titled, *Word Study in Action: Activating Prior Knowledge* which is to give teachers an example of what activating prior knowledge looks like and examples of student responses. Students may use a K-W-L chart during a lesson which lists what they already know about a topic, what they wonder, and then finally, what they learned after the lesson was taught. This
scaffolds their learning by bringing in that discussion piece to the lesson and leading them to think deeper about a topic. The rationale for using this strategy is that it allows teachers to have a better understanding of what their students already know which will act as a guide when putting into place scaffolds and differentiation. The strategy of having a student use a K-W-L chart grants students to monitor their learning. Provided as a tool in the professional development is a downloadable K-W-L chart that is free on TeachersPayTeachers.

**Sentence Frames**

Sentence frames are a great scaffolding strategy in that they give prompts to the students. Using sentence frames gives students context on what they are learning and what word works best within the sentence. Being able to use context clues when reading is such a crucial strategy as inferencing is done every time you read. If you can understand most of the sentence, you will most likely be able to infer the meaning of an unknown word. Sentence frames guide students into learning the reading strategy of context clues. Creating sentence frames should be made with intention. If you are teaching about text structures such as compare and contrast, you want to choose a sentence frame that displays that. The rationale for using sentence frames is that they give students the opportunity to use oral language when they are reading them aloud (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). Using sentence frames also is beneficial for ELLs because it teaches them the proper use of English grammar and writing. As Levine, Lukens, and Smallwood (2007) suggest, the strategy of sentence frames teaches students to utilize and structure academic language. A tool provided for sentence frames in professional development is a link to an article titled *Why You Should Be Supporting Your English Language Learners with Sentence Frames*, written by Alexis Brakebill. This article gives teachers reasons why they should use sentence frames to
support English language learners and also, how to use sentence frames. I have provided an example in the video that shows how you can use this with your class.

**English Language Development**

English language development should be taught separately and during content lessons (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). Teachers must recognize that English instruction, such as learning new vocabulary words, is taught through a block of time that specifically focuses on vocabulary. It is also important that high-frequency words are taught before content area lessons. For instance, if you are teaching a science lesson that includes complex terms such as mechanical energy and chemical energy, you need to explicitly introduce that vocabulary before the lesson. When more academic language is presented, you need to address it through direct instruction such as a vocabulary preview. Just as Brandes et al. (2017) says how even though students may have strategies to figure out unknown words, they will still require the teaching of new words that may be harder for them to figure out.

**Contextualized Language and Modeling**

Gibbons (2015) explains contextualized language as it is language that is heard and used in an appropriate context and meaningfully used for a specific purpose. Contextualized language refers to teachers putting context to the language they are teaching through modeling using gestures and representations. The teacher teaches topics through uses of visuals that consist of pictures, maps, media, manipulatives, gestures, etc. Most people are very visual learners and can make connections easier if they can associate words to pictures and gestures. This is important because ELLs are learning English and need to be able to associate words that relate to their own life and teachers can do this through modeling with gestures and visuals. Using modeling makes language more understandable by using intonation and movement (Zweirs, 2014). When students
watch our modeling, their brains begin to soak in new terms and make sense of new ideas (Zweirs, 2014). Modeling language and expectations for students, gives them a clear example for what they need to do.

**Conclusion**

This professional development product is to provide teachers with awareness of a problem involving the teaching of English language learners, a theoretical framework to find a solution to the problem, ways that teachers can go about fixing this problem through the use of strategies, and tools to support the strategies. The purpose of this chapter was to reiterate and summarize the problem and solution using a theoretical framework and evidence-based research to support the effectiveness of using vocabulary strategies to assist teachers of English language learners in becoming more equipped to teach them. In Chapter 4, I will conclude with a summary stating my research questions and identified problem. I will also discuss my intended results of the product and takeaways.
Chapter 4: Conclusion

This capstone project has explored the problem of teachers being ill-equipped to teach English language learners. Both students and teachers are to meet New York state standards and English language learners require appropriate modifications and accommodations in order to meet them. Several research questions have developed throughout this project such as;

Why is it important that teachers are given the proper training and tools to teach English language learners?

How can teachers implement strategies to scaffold for ELLs?

How does vocabulary link to students reading comprehension?

In my research, I have found that teachers need access to professional training to work with ELLs because it is critical for ELLs to be successful, and the majority of teachers will have them in their classrooms.

Using research, I have created a product that displays a solution to the current problem with teaching English language learners. The product brings awareness of the importance of adequate training for teachers of English language learners. It is likely that teachers will teach culturally and linguistically diverse communities, so they need to be competent to teach them (Li, 2016). There can also be misconceptions when teaching English language learners, therefore teachers need to have the tools and training to ensure that they are effectively evaluating their students. The solution to the inadequate training of teachers constituted in this product is for teachers to scaffold their students and make vocabulary instruction a priority. Using the framework of Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development supports that teachers can ensure students' learning is taking place through guided support. Vocabulary ranks important in ELLs learning because they need the foundation of academic language in order to succeed in all
content areas. In the product, I have made it evident that vocabulary leads to reading comprehension and that there are multiple methods that teachers can use when teaching vocabulary. I have explained how teachers can implement vocabulary strategies through collaborative group work (Gibbons, 2015), using mnemonic instruction (Li, 2016), activating prior knowledge (Dong, 2013), utilizing sentence frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010), English language development (Donnelly & Roe, 2010) as both a separate lesson and during content lessons, and through using contextualized language and modeling (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2007). I learned that scaffolding students by teaching them vocabulary strategy is just one solution to the problem. It is displayed as a solution with the idea in mind that vocabulary leads to reading comprehension, and reading comprehension leads to success in content areas. As stated by Li (2016), “In order for ELLs to succeed academically, they need to learn content and the English language skills needed to learn that content at the same time” (p. 50). One English language skill refers to vocabulary skills and Li (2016) is stressing the importance of the skills that one must require to understand content. In addition, Lesaux et al. (2010) also support this idea when they state how the relation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension can be reciprocal, and that comprehension may lead to wider reading. This professional development product provides teachers with some ideas and tools to scaffold their ELLs.

Implications

Several implications for both student learning and teaching have been established based on my research findings. Teachers will now feel more comfortable knowing that they can use scaffolds to support their English language learners through the use of teaching vocabulary strategies. Teachers now have evidence-based research such as Vygotsky’s (1978) theory, the
Zone of Proximal Development which explains how putting scaffolds in place is effective when working with any kind of learner. Gibbons (2015) uses the scenario of how ZPD is used in daily behaviors such as teaching a child to get dressed. In addition, teachers now have some tools that they can utilize for their professional learning. These tools reflect the ideas discussed in the research and product such as using collaborative group work (Gibbons, 2015) through games and turn & talk, activating prior knowledge (Dong, 2013) using a KWL chart, and utilizing sentence frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010). Teachers can use these strategies with any grade level.

Implications for student learning is that students will feel more comfortable taking risks if they feel they are supported in their learning. Just as Gibbons (2015) implies, collaborative group work allows ELLs who are not confident in English to feel comfortable participating and sharing ideas in a smaller group setting. Another implication for student learning is that students can choose which strategies work for them and will take that new learning with them as they progress and move on to other grades. Finally, students will be able to confide in their teachers for support and guidance. Gibbons (2015) stated, “Good teachers also drive their students to the sky and help them gain confidence, but through the scaffolding they provide, set them up for success rather than allowing them to fall (p. 3). When teachers provide scaffolds for their students, the students become aware that their teachers want them to succeed and therefore, they will seek more support and guidance when needed.

Recommendations for Future Research

Limited research was found on K-12 teachers' individual struggles teaching English language learners due to a lack of professional development. Therefore, recommendations for future research include more studies that delve into the individual problems of teachers, who do not hold an ESL certification but work with ELLs, studies that include what specific professional
development is being offered in school districts to support teachers of ELLs, and studies that include information on the funding districts receive to support teachers of ELLs. Further research would aid me in understanding just how big the problem is and what steps teachers and districts are taking to address it. It would have been helpful to have more specific statistics to include when creating concrete points about why the problem is necessary to understand.

Conclusions

There are three takeaways that I have come across when completing this capstone project. One conclusion derived from the research is that vocabulary knowledge leads to reading comprehension. Knowledge of vocabulary is seen as reciprocal to reading comprehension in that one leads to another (Lesaux et al., 2010). If a student can understand the meaning of a word, they will more easily be able to manipulate words when reading and gain understanding (Sweet & Snow, 2004). Therefore, teaching vocabulary ranks importance.

Another conclusion derived from the research is that providing scaffolds for students gives them more opportunities for success. In my research, I have used Vygotsky’s (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development as a lens to support how scaffolds give students more opportunities for success. It was found that many researchers used scaffolding as a best practice to support English language learners. Such researchers include but are not limited to Gibbons (2015), Li (2016), and Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood (2007).

Finally, the last conclusion derived from the research is that there are numerous vocabulary strategies to support English language learners. From my research, I have found multiple articles, books, websites, and videos that teachers can implement in their instruction when working with English language learners as a way to support their language development. Some of the strategies I have found are teaching vocabulary as a collaborative activity (Gibbons,
METHODS FOR TEACHING ELLS VOCABULARY

2015) through games and turn & talk, teaching vocabulary through mnemonic instruction (Li, 2016) where students can create their own sentences, pictures, or words to help them understand terms, activating prior knowledge (Dong, 2013) through a KWL chart, using sentence frames (Donnelly & Roe, 2010) to support students in the context of a word, teaching ELD (Donnelly & Roe, 2010) as both a separate instruction as well as infused in content lessons, and lastly, teaching vocabulary through contextualized language and modeling (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2007).

Final Thoughts

English language learners are the fastest-growing student population across the United States and the ELL population more than doubled between the years 1989-2006 (NCELA, 2006). In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act was passed which holds schools accountable for teachers to set goals for their students so that everyone succeeds (Lee, 2021). If teachers are not given the proper training to work with ELLs, those students will not have the support for them to meet their learning needs. If students are not receiving the support from their teachers, they will not progress and reach the zone of proximal development which holds them back from their full potential. English language learners can succeed when given the support from teachers who are willing to put in the time to work with them and set goals for them.
References


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Appendix A

Professional Development Product

Video Link: https://watch.screencastify.com/v/0QdRmky73RcXwTqdKR6w
Appendix B

Professional Development Presentation Slides

Slide 1:
Overview of the Professional Development

- Become aware, discuss, and address a current problem that involves working with English language learners
- Learn ways the problem can be solved
- Become aware of teaching strategies that will assist you on putting into practice the solution within your own classrooms
- Observe tools that will support you in utilizing such strategies

Agenda with Slide Numbers

- Introduction to the Problem ........................................ 4-6
- Discussion of the Problem .......................................... 6-13
- Solutions to the Problem ........................................... 14-20
- Importance of Strategy Teaching .................................. 21-22
- Importance of Teaching Vocabulary .............................. 23-24
- Vocabulary Strategy Training ...................................... 25-61
- Thank You ................................................................. 62
- Tool Box ................................................................. 63
- References ............................................................... 64-68
Slide 4:

Introduction to the Problem

Slide 5:

What is the problem?

Most teacher education programs across grade levels and content areas, do not correctly prepare teachers with the knowledge of specific methods on how to teach English language learners (Oliveira and Shoffner, 2016).
Teachers are lacking the skills and tools to work with English language learners because they are not given the proper preparation and professional development (Oliveira and Shoffner, 2016).

This becomes a problem because there are many ELLs in our classrooms being taught by teachers who feel they are not equipped to teach them (Oliveira and Shoffner, 2016).
Who does this affect?

- Teachers: rigorous standards (NYS Common Core, Next Generation State Standards), evaluations (observations from administrators, test scores)
- Students: opportunity to succeed

Why is the problem important to address?

2001

NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND

2015

EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT
Under ESSA, each state creates an education plan for its schools within a framework provided by the federal government. The law gives parents and caregivers a chance to weigh in on these plans. Each state plan must describe:

- Academic standards
- Annual testing
- School accountability
- Goals for academic achievement
- Plans for supporting and improving struggling schools
- State and local report cards

(Lee, 2021, p.1)
Slide 12:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Every Student Succeeds Act</th>
<th>No Child Left Behind</th>
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<tr>
<td>States are responsible for holding schools accountable for student achievement. The law provides a framework, but it’s a flexible framework. Each state can set its own goals for student achievement within that federal framework.</td>
<td>States were responsible for holding schools accountable for student achievement. The law provided a framework for states, but there was less flexibility for states to set their own goals. The law also put forward a universal goal that every student in every school be proficient in reading and math.</td>
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(Understood Team, 2021)

Slide 13:

**Why is the problem important to address?**

- Teachers may mistake students to have learning disabilities (Pereira & de Oliveira, 2015).
- Teachers are held to high expectations
- Population of ELLs has reached 5.3 million in 2010 and has increased 29.7% since 2000 (Li, 2016).
- Communities are made up of culturally and linguistically diverse learners and teachers must be competent to teach them (Li, 2016).
Solutions to the Problem

Solution

- Training teachers in ways that they can implement vocabulary strategies into their instruction through the theoretical framework of Vygotsky’s (1978) Zone of Proximal Development.
Slide 16:

**Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development**

- Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

![Diagram of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development]

(Doezee, 2012)

Slide 17:

**Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development**

Vygotsky defines this as “the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86)
**Problem:** Teachers are not given the professional development and tools needed to teach ELLs.

**Solution:** PD on infusing vocabulary strategies into instruction given the theory of Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development stating that students can learn past their independent ability when receiving scaffolded instruction from a trained individual.

---

**Solution**

**Vocabulary Leads to Reading Comprehension**

“The acquisition of knowledge and skills in math, science, social studies, and the visual and performing arts is dependent on proficiency in oral language, reading, and writing, and particularly on the ability to use academic language in these areas. In order for ELLs to succeed academically, they need to learn content and the English language skills needed to learn that content at the same time” (Li, 2016, p. 50).
Slide 20:

Solution

Vocabulary Leads to Reading Comprehension

Reading Comprehension Leads to Understanding

Understanding Leads to Student Success

Slide 21:

**Importance of Strategy Teaching**

- Student access to control their own learning
- Vocabulary strategies will help students comprehend what they are learning
- Strategies give students the opportunity to find what learning method works best for them

Since reading comprehension is a complex skill, it requires higher-level processing. Higher-level processing is drawing on prior knowledge, resolving structural and semantic interpretations, and making inferences (Kintsch, 1994).

Students who know more academic words can be strategic while reading and students who can manipulate language will be more successful in learning (Sweet & Snow, 2004).
Slide 22:

Importance of Strategy Teaching

Indirect teaching of words through word exposure

Image: (Colorfuel Studio, n.d.)

Slide 23:

Importance of Teaching Vocabulary

The relation between vocabulary knowledge and reading comprehension can be reciprocal, such that as students learn more words, their comprehension is better facilitated; hence, successful comprehension may lead to increased opportunities for learning new words and wider reading (Lesaux, Kieffer, Faller, & Kelley, 2010; Stanovich, 1986).
Slide 24:

**Importance of Teaching Vocabulary**

*Academic vocabulary links to proficiency in reading comprehension* (Lubliner & Smetana, 2005).

Slide 25:

**Vocabulary Strategies**

- Collaborative Group Work
- Mnemonic Instruction
- Prior Knowledge and K-W-L Charts
- Sentence Frames
- Instruction of English Language Development
- Contextualized Language and Modeling
Slide 26:

Collaborative Group Work

Slide 27:

What is it?

Giving students strategies to use within group/partner activities so that they work collaboratively.
Slide 28:

**Why?**

- Lecture-style teaching EXCLUDES ELLs and makes it more difficult for them to reinstate concepts or ask questions (Li, 2016)
- Allows ELLs to become comfortable enough to ask questions
- Allows ELLs to interact with peers to solidify ideas
- Games used during cooperative learning get students engaged in the content

Slide 29:

**Using Collaborative Group Work to Teach Vocabulary**

**Rationale:** Students learn so much through working with others, therefore, teaching students to work collaboratively to learn vocabulary is a great strategy to use in your instruction.

Collaborative Group Work gives students the opportunity to connect their ideas with others in a way that is comfortable to them and increases their use of language (Gibbons, 2015).
Slide 30:

**Example 1: Vocabulary Games**

**Using Collaborative Group Work to Teach Vocabulary**

**Game #1: Vocabulary Swat**

*What you’ll need:*
- 2 Fly Swatters (Dollar Store)

*Prepare:*
- Draw a line down the middle of your whiteboard/chartboard. Write 10-15 vocabulary words in different spots in each space, making sure that you put the same words on each side. I would recommend not putting them in the same place on each side.

*How to play:*
1. Divide your students into two teams and have each line up on one side of the board.
2. One student from each team comes up to the board and grabs a fly swatter.
3. The teacher reads the definition of the word. After the teacher is finished reading the outer definition, students read the correct word. The first student to correctly read a word gets a point for their team. Each student passes the swatter to the next person in line and they go to the end of the line.
4. Continue until all words have been covered at least once. I like to cover all of the words more than once, but you can definitely adjust this depending on the time that you have.

*Image:*
(Crak & Apples Design, 2015)

Slide 31:

**Example 2: Turn & Talk**

**Using Collaborative Group Work to Teach Vocabulary**

**Pollination**
Slide 32:

Slide 33:

Teachers give students vocabulary words with their definitions and instruct students to create words, sentences, or pictures of their own to remember the meaning of new words (Li, 2016).
Slide 34:

Why?

- Allows students to be creative
- They can choose what works best for them

Slide 35:

Using Mnemonic Instruction to Teach Vocabulary

Rationale: Students learn better when they use strategies that work best for them.

Students create analogies that apply the vocabulary words in personal ways which allow ELLs to make connections using their own unique framework (Li, 2016).
Slide 36:

Using Mnemonic Instruction to Teach Vocabulary

Example:
Students create words, sentences, or pictures of their own to remember the meaning of new words.

Predator: an animal that hunts and eats other animals.

Slide 37:

Draws a picture

Writes a sentence

House cats are excellent predators because they hunt and kill tons of mice.

Food-hunter

Creates words
Slide 38:

Prior Knowledge and K-W-L Charts

Slide 39:

What is it?

Teachers activate students prior knowledge by asking students what they already know about a word or what they think it is.

Teachers have students use K-W-L charts to monitor new words they learn.
Slide 40:

- Teachers will get a sense of what students already know about a topic
- Gives students the opportunity to think deeper about a topic
- Allows students to make associations with a topic
- Has students chart out what they already know, what they wonder, and what they have learned

  (Levine, Lukens & Smallwood, 2007).

Slide 41:

Rationale: Discussing students prior knowledge allows the teacher to scaffold the student throughout the lesson because they will get a sense on what direction to take. Using a K-W-L chart, students can not only discuss what they already know about the word, but they can think deeper about it and find out more information (Levine, Lukens & Smallwood, 2007). Students keep track of their new learning with this graphic organizer.
Slide 42:

Example:

Has the word danger in it. Maybe it means it is dangerous.

Maybe something is in danger.

I've heard this word before! The grey wolf is endangered because there are not a lot of them left on Earth.

endangered

Slide 43:

Example:

endangered

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<th>K</th>
<th>W</th>
<th>L</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What I Know</td>
<td>What I Wonder</td>
<td>What I Learned</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Image: (Gardner, n.d.)
Sentence Frames

What is it?

Teachers write out sentence frames for students to place new vocabulary words in the blanks to help them make sense of new learned words. A word bank is provided.

(Levine, Lukens & Smallwood, 2007).
Slide 46:

Why?

- Scaffolds students by giving them prompts
- Gives students context
- Clarify instructions
- Learn English sentence structure and grammar
  (Levine, Lukens & Smallwood, 2007).

Slide 47:

Using Sentence Frames to Teach Vocabulary

Rationale: Being able to use context clues is an important reading strategy and using sentence frames scaffolds that strategy.

This strategy teaches students to utilize and structure academic language (Levine, Lukens & Smallwood, 2007).
**Slide 48:**

Using Sentence Frames to Teach Vocabulary

Example:

- absorb
- adopt

**Slide 49:**

Absorb means to soak up something.

Adopt means to take care of a person or animal.

(Braekebill, 2018)
Slide 50: Instruction of English Language Development

Slide 51: What is it?
Teachers give explicit instruction on vocabulary terms through both independent lessons and during core lessons.

(Brandes et al., 2017)
Why?

- Gives students more than one opportunity to learn new academic language
- Gives students the opportunity to be exposed to new words and practice using them

(Brandes et al., 2017)

Rationale: Instruction of ELD gives students exposure to high frequency words before delving into a content lesson.

Even though students may have strategies to figure out the meaning of unknown words, they still require the teaching of new words that may be more complex for them to figure out (Brandes et al., 2017).
**Slide 54:**

**Using ELD to Teach Vocabulary**

*Example:*

**As Separate Instruction:**
- Vocabulary lesson

**Infused into Content Instruction:**
- Vocabulary preview before the lesson

*ELD should be implemented both separately and intertwined with core subjects (Donnelly and Roe, 2010).*

**Slide 55:**

- **Obtuse:** an angle more than 90 degrees
- **Acute:** an angle less than 90 degrees
- **Right:** an angle that is exactly 90 degrees
Slide 56:

Contextualized Language and Modeling

Slide 57:

What is it?

Teacher uses visuals, gestures, facial expressions, body language, illustrations, maps, graphs, timelines, diagrams, manipulatives.

Teacher models the language orally when teaching new vocabulary. Students repeat.

(Brandes et al., 2017)
Slide 58:

Why?

- Students may be visual learners
- Allows students to make connections and associate words to pictures and gestures
- Students have the opportunity to use oral language

(Brandee et al., 2017)

Slide 59:

Rationale: Contextualized language allows for students to visualize the word they are learning and associate the word with things in their lives. Modeling gives students a clear understanding and an example. If students are given a clear example and a chance to try on their own, they will most likely internalize it.

Using modeling makes language more understandable by using intonation and movement (Zweirs, 2014).
**Slide 60:**

**Example:**
Teacher uses visuals, gestures, facial expressions, body language, illustrations, maps, graphs, timelines, diagrams, manipulatives.

**Vocabulary term:** despondent

Clarissa was despondent after her cat of 15 years passed away.

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**Slide 61:**

**Example:**
Teacher models the language orally when teaching new vocabulary. Students repeat.

**Vocabulary term:** despondent

Clarissa was despondent after her cat of 15 years passed away.
Thank You!

I hope that this professional development has helped you learn strategies to scaffold and support the English language learners in your classroom.
Supporting tools are to follow!

Slide 63:

TOOL BOX:

- **10 VOCABULARY GAMES FOR THE ENGAGED ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM** (website) (Chalk & Apples Design, 2015).
  

- **Tips for Teaching English Learners Video Series: Using Turn and Talk to Encourage ELLs** (video) (Continental Press, 2018).
  
  https://www.chalkapplesdesign.com/teaching-ell-turn-and-talk

- **K-W-L Chart** (download handout) (Gardner, n.d.).
  
  https://www.teacherspayteachers.com/Product/KWL-Chart-595724

- **Word Study in Action: Activating Prior Knowledge** (video) (Knapton, 2010).
  
  https://www.chalkapplesdesign.com/word-study-in-action

- **Why You Should Be Supporting Your English Language Learners with Sentence Frames** (website) (Brakebill, 2018)
  
References


Slide 65:


Slide 66:

Donnelly, W. B., & Roe, C. J. (2010). Using Sentence Frames to Develop Academic Vocabulary for English Learners. The Reading Teacher, 64(2), 131–136. https://doi.org/10.1598/RT.64.2.5


Heinemann.


Slide 67:


METHODS FOR TEACHING ELLS VOCABULARY

Slide 68:


Yu Ren Dong. (2013). POWERFUL LEARNING TOOLS FOR ELLs. The Science Teacher (National Science Teachers Association), 80(4), 51-.
