Best Practices in Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students: A Case Study

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Abstract

This paper considered best practices in teaching culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students. A case study research design was used to discover specific English as second language (ESL) strategies teachers are using in their classrooms and specific ESL strategies students find engaging and helpful to learn. This study collected data using teacher surveys, student surveys, and observations from two lessons that were created and implemented by the researchers in a 3rd grade classroom comprised of diverse students. One lesson used the Madeline Hunter model and did not incorporate ESL strategies, while the second lesson utilized the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model and incorporated several ESL strategies. Data were analyzed with the constant comparative method and open coding. Findings showed limitations with knowledge of and use of ESL strategies among teachers and increased levels of engagement and understanding among students during lessons infused with ESL strategies.

Keywords: English language learners, culturally and linguistically diverse students, English as a second language

Introduction

In an era of changing demographics and inclusive classrooms, it is important to consider the unique and varying needs of CLD students in schools. Students who are learning English while simultaneously learning content require specialized instructional approaches. In these cases, CLD students benefit from both content and language classroom instruction. Teachers must first take into consideration the varying linguistic levels of each CLD student and then implement developmentally appropriate strategies and techniques, such as sheltered instruction, scaffolding, hands-on instruction, the use of realia, Total Physical Response, and critical thinking and questioning.

Gibson (2016) explained that the number of CLD learners is expected to continue to increase and stated, “With the rise of ELL and immigrant inhabitants, their success is important to the future of the nation” (p. 134). Teachers have a great responsibility to help CLD students be successful. Although there are multiple and various instructional models available, Gibson found persistent achievement gaps between CLD
students and their native English-speaking counterparts. Gibson reported:

Several studies have displayed a trend of achievement gaps between ELLs and L2 students. The research exhibits a clear pattern that performance gaps pertaining to CLD students are an issue that exist in grades Pre-K through the college and university level of education. (p. 134)

With this in mind, the researchers of this study were motivated to find effective instructional methods to use with CLD students.

**Theoretical Framework**

The theory guiding this research stems from experts in the field of bilingual and ESL education. Considering the works of Krashen (1987); Echevarria, Vogt, and Short (2014); and Herrera and Murry (2011), three main theories provided direction from data collection through analysis. Krashen’s (1987) input hypothesis and comprehensible input theories were the basis of theory concerning ESL pedagogy that ensure CLD students understand messages presented in content area lessons, even while they learn English. Comprehensible input is any type of support that enables students to understand meaning through spoken verbal words and accompanying non-verbal supports. Comprehensible input may include visuals, realia, gestures, videos, simplified or adapted speech or text, and pacing.

The researchers also considered the distinction between the following instructional components with respect to best practices used in inclusive classrooms with CLD students: approach, method, strategy, and technique. Herrera and Murry (2011) emphasized the importance of consistent terminology among teachers and explained the differences between these instructional components:

- **Approach** - Based upon a particular theory of learning, and teachers must decide which theoretical framework is best suited to instructing their students and meeting their needs. Once an approach to teaching has been established, the teacher then chooses appropriate methods that fit within that approach.
- **Method** - Includes a collection of philosophically-grounded and functionally-related techniques to help implement instruction.
- **Strategy** - Comprises a collection of theory-grounded techniques, which are the specific actions taken to implement the method and put it into practice.
- **Technique** - Are specific and intentional actions strategically used to achieve a goal.

According to Herrera and Murry, instruction for CLD students should be aligned in a vertical manner and begin with an approach that serves as an umbrella encompassing all instructional components. Instruction should end with carefully selected strategies and techniques that support the learning environment.

Finally, the researchers considered the sheltered instruction method for teaching ELLs content and language simultaneously. This model, known as SIOP, employs sheltered instruction techniques to teach content in a comprehensible manner (Echevarria et al., 2014). By using this model, the content becomes the vehicle for language instruction so that both content and language are learned in conjunction with each other. The goal of this study was to investigate the following research question: What are effective instructional methods for use with students who are learning English as a second language?

**Literature Review**

According to Barrow and Markman-Pithers (2016), the number of CLD students in the United States who are served within public schools is growing rapidly. For example, Texas served approximately 455,000 public school students in 2014 (Texas Education Agency, 2014). Many researchers agree that teachers must have specialized skills and knowledge to teach all students effectively (Krashen, 1987; Echevarria et al., 2014; Herrera & Murry, 2011). Although there are a great number of instructional models available for use with CLD
students, three of the most commonly used models are Transitional Bilingual Education (TBE), Content-Based Instruction, and the SIOP Model.

The TBE method is by far the most prevalently used model in schools today (Herrera & Murry, 2011; Hinton, 2015; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2016). TBE utilizes a student’s native language, along with English. This instructional model is short in duration and lasts for only two to three years before a student transition fully to instruction in English. The underlying premise of TBE is to focus on grade-level academic content at the same time they are learning English. An issue with TBE is that it does not provide students enough time to gain English proficiency before they are moved into an English-only classroom.

Another instructional model used with CLD learners is Content-Based Instruction (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2016). This instructional model gives “priority to communicating, over predetermined linguistic content, teaching through communication rather than for it” (p. 131). The Content-Based Instruction model mixes content and language learning together so that students do not fall behind in either. According to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, “Teachers must have clear language objectives as well as content learning objectives for their lessons” (p. 134). Thus, teachers focus on improving student knowledge with specific content and language skills in each lesson. Use of Content-Based Instruction requires a significant amount of scaffolding to bridge the gap between background knowledge and new material. For this reason, it is vital that teachers ascertain students’ background knowledge and previous experiences. Teachers must also be prepared to design and implement learning activities that support students with limited background knowledge and experiences. Content-Based Instruction also relies heavily on the use of visuals, examples, and repetition.

The SIOP Model is also commonly used among CLD students (Echevarria et al., 2014). Echevarria et al. stated that the SIOP Model was developed “as an approach for teachers to integrate content and language instruction for students learning through a new language” (p. 17). The SIOP Model is used in lesson planning and incorporates cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, and lesson objectives for both the content and the language learning.

Echevarria et al. (2014) asserted that lessons following the SIOP Model are most effective when the content objective (i.e., the objective that focuses on a specific knowledge and skill within the curricular area) and the language objective (i.e., the objective that considers the current language level of CLD students) “are systematically woven” together (p. 19). Teachers who use the SIOP Model make connections between the academic content and students’ prior knowledge with visuals, modeling, graphic organizers, and adapted texts. Teachers also reinforce taught information with supplemental non-verbal materials, such as related texts, illustrations or models, and computer resources, to make content comprehensible. Much like Content-Based Instruction, the SIOP Model teaches content and language simultaneously and requires frequent use of scaffolding. Positive attributes of this model include its adaptability to the teacher’s own style, high levels of engagement among students, and the ability to teach all students in an inclusive environment.

Methodology

Research Design

This yearlong qualitative case study was conducted during the 2016-2017 school year and beginning of the 2017-2018 school year with the purpose of identifying effective instructional methods for use with CLD students. Lincoln and Guba (as cited in Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) asserted, “The case study allows for thick description that puts the reader vicariously into the context and allows him or her to interact with the data presented” (p. 40). By employing a case study research design, the researchers provided a platform for
Readers to transfer these ideas to other CLD settings.

Research Questions

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions provided guidance:

1. What strategies and techniques do teachers view as effective for CLD learners?
2. What strategies and techniques do CLD students view as effective for themselves?

Participants

The research sample for this study included students and teachers in classrooms that have multiple CLD learners in two different West Texas elementary schools that serve Kindergarten through fifth grades. The Director of Teacher Certification at a university-based teacher preparation program identified these schools as optimal settings for this study. Teachers in the identified schools were surveyed to discover the different ESL strategies and methods they used when working with CLD students. The principal at one of these schools identified a 3rd grade class that consisted of a large number of CLD students. This class included 19 students, all of whom were of Hispanic origin. Among these students, 14 had limited English proficiency, 11 were female, and eight were male.

Data Collection Procedures

The lead researcher (i.e., the first author of this paper) began this study by reviewing standard best practices in the field of ESL instruction to ascertain effective research-based strategies and techniques. The lead researcher compiled a list of ESL strategies and techniques to assist with creating lessons, which would later be taught in a local area school.

Before creating and teaching lesson plans, the lead researcher distributed the teacher survey to all teachers in the two West Texas elementary schools through school email. Due to an extremely low response rate, the researchers extended the teacher survey to other elementary schools in the Texas Panhandle region who serve large populations of CLD students. The lead researcher compiled data by assigning each returned survey a pseudonym and de-identified all other information.

After the teacher surveys were completed, the researchers created two lesson plans: one lesson plan with ESL strategies and one without. For the lesson plan without ESL strategies, the researchers chose to use the Madeline Hunter format because it is well known, research-based, and considered good pedagogy. For the lesson plan using ESL strategies, the researchers chose to use the SIOP Model because it is known as a good lesson model for CLD students. The researchers chose for the topic of the two lesson plans to be similar, but not the same. During each lesson, both researchers were present, one as the teacher and the other as an observer. Both researchers took field notes to document their thoughts and understandings, as well as the actions, behaviors, and levels of engagement of students.

Lesson plan without ESL strategies. The first lesson plan addressed plot elements. The first lesson began with an anticipatory set of watching a roller coaster video to capture attention and get students excited to learn. Following the anticipatory set, the lead researcher moved into the input and modeling phase of the Madeline Hunter model. The lead researcher distributed a handout to students that related the different plot elements (i.e., exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution) to a roller coaster ride and described characteristics of each plot element. Next, the lead researcher read a children’s book to the class, and students worked with the lead researcher to label plot elements from the story on the whiteboard using a drawing of a roller coaster. Students were placed into small groups, read a different story, and completed the plot elements roller coaster activity with less support. After small group practice, the lead researchers planned an independent practice activity; however, students struggled greatly with this
Lesson plan with ESL strategies. The second lesson addressed sequencing events in a story. The second lesson began with activation of prior knowledge and building background. The lead researcher made a sandwich out of order (i.e., meat, bread, cheese, bread), which students recognized as incorrect. The researcher connected sequencing used in making a sandwich to sequencing with events in a story. Next, the lead researcher pre-taught essential vocabulary (i.e., sequence, setting, resolution, and plot). To accomplish this, the lead researcher had dual language vocabulary notes for students in Spanish and in English. After reviewing essential vocabulary, the lead researcher performed the teaching component by explaining beginning, middle, and end, along with events that usually occur. The lead researcher then read a children’s book to students. After reading the story, students worked with the lead researcher to retell the story events. The lead researcher drew pictures and used realia to represent students’ responses. When students struggled to recall story events, the lead researcher helped them to look for the answer in the book. After the whole group activity, students were placed into small groups, and the lead researcher read a different children’s book. The lead researcher distributed sentence stems of different story events to each small group, and students worked together to complete the sentence stems and place the story events in order. The last activity of this lesson was an assessment that was completed individually. The lead researcher gave each student a paragraph with pictures. Students were instructed to read the paragraph and identify events that happened at the beginning, middle, and end.

After both lessons were taught, students were asked to complete a survey, which was in pencil-and-paper format. The classroom teacher assisted students by reading and explaining the questions using comprehensible input and translations as needed. The student survey provided students with the opportunity to provide feedback concerning which ESL strategies helped them understand the content and which lesson they preferred.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data from the teacher and student surveys, the researchers compiled responses into separate Word documents. The researchers used the constant comparative method and open coding as suggested by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to produce grounded theory. Throughout this process, the researchers considered both a priori codes and emergent codes to construct themes from the data. As data were coded, themes began to emerge, and the researchers used these themes to sort and analyze the data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Each time a theme was noted, the researchers used marginal notes to title each theme and then color-code them using highlighters. After data were coded, the researchers refined codes to combine themes, using subthemes as necessary.

To ensure trustworthiness, the researchers addressed credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. To promote credibility, the researchers used prolonged engagement with all participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers designed and implemented two lesson plans and collected survey responses for a period of four months. Triangulating data from diverse data sources also helped to establish credibility (Denzin, 1970). By triangulating different data sources, the researchers were able to provide checks during data analysis and consider tentative emergent themes from varied perspectives. The researchers attended to dependability by creating an audit trail and utilizing member checks to ensure data were reported accurately and could be accessed easily if needed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Finally, the researchers focused on transferability by including thick, rich description, “by describing in multiple low-level abstractions the data base from which transferability judgments may be made by potential appliers” (Erlandson, 1993, p. 145).
Findings

Teacher Survey

For this study, the researchers wanted to ascertain which ESL strategies teachers used to teach CLD students. In order to do this, the researchers surveyed teachers who worked with large populations of CLD students in the Texas Panhandle region. These efforts resulted in the return of 17 surveys. As shown in Table 1, the teaching experiences of teacher participants ranged from two to 34 years. With respect to classroom composition, 10 teacher participants taught in classrooms with 25% or fewer CLD learners, four taught in classrooms with 26-75% CLD learners, and three taught in classrooms with more than 75% CLD learners.

Table 1

Demographic Information for Teacher Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
<th>Percentage of CLD Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mrs. A</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mrs. B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>3 years</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mrs. C</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28 years</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mrs. D</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>19 years</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mrs. E</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mrs. F</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>25 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mrs. G</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>34 years</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. H</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>10 years</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mrs. I</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mrs. J</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mrs. K</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mrs. L</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>4 years</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
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<td>Mrs. M</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Mrs. N</td>
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<td>Mrs. O</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>5 years</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mrs. P</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26 years</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mrs. Q</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>11 years</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Despite varying teaching experiences and classroom compositions, teacher participants had several commonalities with their survey responses. Teacher participants were asked to identify the ESL strategies they used in their classrooms to teach CLD students, and they provided an extensive listing. This listing included visuals, hands-on materials, learning about student cultures, providing individual help, modeling, use of sentence stems, grouping, and clarifying instructions. Two teacher participants identified ESL strategies that
resonated with the researchers as being strong, research-based ESL strategies. For instance, Mrs. K listed, “pre-teaching vocabulary, creating dual language supports including word walls, vocabulary lists, glossaries, and note-taking guides.” Mrs. M indicated, “Concrete works best when available.” Since the ESL strategies of pre-teaching vocabulary, using dual language supports, and use of realia are ESL strategies continually mentioned in pedagogical research, it was surprising that only two teacher participants mentioned these specific ESL strategies.

All of the teacher participants shared that the ESL strategies they used were effective in their classrooms either all of the time or most of the time, with the exception of Mrs. F. Mrs. F said, “I haven’t tried them out, so I’m not sure.” Five teacher participants also mentioned ESL strategies that they tried and were not effective. For example, Mrs. C shared, “Lecture teaching does not work anymore with most all kids, and especially not with the ELLs.” Similarly, Mrs. L noted, “Talking slowly, yelling at them louder, or putting them in time-out does not help if the student doesn’t understand what you are saying.”

While analyzing data, the researchers noticed that some teacher participants indicated specific ESL strategies as effective, while other teacher participants found them ineffective. For example, seven teacher participants explained that student grouping techniques, such as peer interpreters, classroom buddies, or small group activities, were effective. However, Mrs. E expressed concerns with the use of student grouping:

Group work is effective if student groups work together and each student can take part in the project. Some students get frustrated and take control to finish the projects if there is little to no input from the culturally-diverse students.

Likewise, Mrs. M declared, “I have tried things that were not so effective, like just partnering the student with a same language peer, but not implementing any other strategy.” These statements indicated that the effectiveness of ESL strategies was dependent upon how well a teacher utilized a specific strategy and whether it addressed the specific needs of CLD students.

Teacher participants specified that they determined the effectiveness of ESL strategies by reviewing student assessment scores and observing students’ communication patterns, attitudes, participation, and desire to learn. Mrs. J explained, “I know these strategies are effective by observations. I can see when a student starts to have a ‘light bulb moment’ or if they are still lost in the curriculum and classroom setting.”

When asked where ESL strategies were learned, teacher participants mostly indicated workshops and trainings conducted within their schools, school districts, and regional education service center. Mrs. M shared that she learned most of her strategies from “staff developments within our school mostly. Some through the district, some from our regional service center, some through obtaining my ESL certification, some from just conversations with more experienced teachers.” Mrs. D explained that she learned “mostly from trial and error. What works for some students may not work for others.” Similarly, Mrs. J shared, “A lot of these strategies come from trial and error. One strategy that works wonders for one student may do nothing for another, so it really depends on the child.” A few teacher participants stated that they learned ESL strategies from college classes, independent research they conducted using online sources, and professional conferences. Mrs. K disclosed, “I learned most of my strategies at Math for English Language Learners (MELL) conferences organized by the Texas State University System.”

Teaching CLD students can come with some challenges, as well. Most of the teacher participants described challenges that they encounter, such as language barriers, parent communication, and cultural differences. For example, Mrs. B shared:

If you are not aware of different beliefs, it can be difficult to understand why a
student feels or reacts a certain way. For instance, not wanting to look you in the eye may seem disrespectful to some, but in various cultures, making eye contact is disrespectful or even inappropriate.

Other challenges teacher participants described were handling a class with students on different levels, students who were afraid to ask for help, students who give up, student behavior issues, lack of understanding of how school works, no previous schooling, and working with students in the silent period. For instance, Mrs. L shared, “Some students come from other countries and do not understand why their parents are leaving them at school all day long…it takes different amounts of time for each student to get used to being at school.”

With regard to overcoming challenges, teacher participants reported using translators, such as another student or an adult; determining students’ linguistic levels, using appropriate pacing, learning about students, and engaging students through their interests. Mrs. A explained:

I think it’s most important to determine what level of education the student is on and try to work from there. Rather than trying to force all students to be on the same level, it is necessary to work much slower with these students.

Other responses included using illustrations, technology, group work, and district resources. Furthermore, Mrs. I advised, “Look at each situation individually and take it head on. Remember that it is our responsibility to find a way to reach every student and never stop trying to find a solution. Utilize every resource that you can find.” Some teacher participants expressed the importance of having patience with students and correcting any mistakes gently. Mrs. O emphasized the importance of “not embarrassing a student or shaming them for the way they speak, but very simply repeating back to them what they said, just in the correct form and without making a big deal about it.”

The last survey question asked teacher participants to describe how they handled students with various linguistic proficiency levels. The most common response concerned the use of specific grouping and differentiated instruction. Seven teacher participants also included peer tutoring, modifying assignments, giving extra time for assignments, and providing instruction that is more specialized. Mrs. O shared that she handled varying linguistic proficiency levels with “differentiated instruction, partner work/help, and one-on-one instruction or conferences.” Mrs. C described techniques she used to modify assignments appropriately:

They all do the same work, but sometimes I shorten assignments and many times just give the student more time to do the assignment. I constantly monitor students to make sure they are understanding and catch them early if they need extra help on an assignment.

Three teacher participants responded to varying linguistic proficiency levels with backup lesson plans, acquiring special resources, and careful monitoring of students. Mrs. J explained the value of back-up lesson plans by stating, “I always have accommodations and back up plans in case I observe students struggling or needing the curriculum to be scaffolded.”

Correspondingly, Mrs. Q recalled a time that she acquired special resources for a student:

I once had a student that was very bright but struggled with English since he spoke Spanish. We were able to order a Spanish version of the textbook. He was able to understand what I said in class, but this way he could focus on the math concepts in class rather than translating.

**Student Survey**

In the student survey, students were asked to identify the most helpful element in the lessons. More than half of the student participants shared that the use of realia in Lesson Two was most helpful (see Table 2). Four students provided comments that they liked.
specific parts of one of the stories. However, these comments did not address this survey question and indicated that while students learned from the story, they did not understand what helped them learn. Quinton commented on the helpfulness of children’s books in the lesson by stating, “She was make it more interesting (interesting) with the books.” Four students provided responses that did not make sense or used spellings that the researchers were unable to decipher.

After the lessons were taught, students were asked to self-report their engagement levels (see Table 2). Students responded to this survey question with possible answers of: 1 = Very Engaged the Whole Time, 2 = Very Engaged Most of the Lesson, 3 = Engaged Half of the Time, and 4 = Not Engaged at All. Out of the nineteen student participants, 14 reported that they were very engaged the whole time, and the other five reported that they were very engaged most of the lesson.

Student participants were also asked to compare the first lesson to the second lesson and indicated the lesson that they liked best. As a majority, student participants liked the second lesson better, which was the lesson with ESL strategies. Fourteen student participants cited that Lesson Two was more fun. The five student participants who preferred Lesson One indicated that they liked the roller coaster references.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Hands-On Activities</th>
<th>Realia</th>
<th>Children’s Books</th>
<th>Unclear Answer</th>
<th>Engagement Level</th>
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<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Bill</td>
<td></td>
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</table>

Note. Engagement levels included 1 = Very Engaged the Whole Time, 2 = Very Engaged Most of the Lesson, 3 = Engaged Half of the Time, and 4 = Not Engaged at All.
Discussion

The aims in this study were to ascertain which ESL strategies teachers are using in their classrooms and what ESL strategies students find engaging and helpful to learn. To achieve this, the researchers determined best practices as outlined by the research, utilized these strategies to develop two model lesson plans, and discover ESL strategies in use among teachers who serve large populations of CLD students. Through their research and with Lesson Two, the researchers found that specific ESL strategies (i.e., realia, visuals, hands-on activities, sentence stems, grouping, pre-teaching vocabulary, dual language notes, providing extra support to CLD students as necessary) were effective. Students demonstrated greater levels of understanding and higher levels of engagement. However, analyses of teacher survey data revealed limited understandings with ESL strategies among teacher participants. While many teacher participants described effective ESL strategies, they each listed only one or two strategies. In addition, the researchers were surprised that some of the ESL strategies described on the teacher survey were not reflective of good pedagogy for CLD students.

In comparing both lessons, the researchers noted that Lesson Two took longer to create and prepare than Lesson One. The researchers also noted that teaching Lesson One seemed to drag on. Students needed concepts explained multiple times, and even after multiple explanations, they still seemed to struggle with understanding the content. On the other hand, teaching Lesson Two went more smoothly. Students transitioned between activities at an appropriate pace demonstrated satisfactory levels of engagement throughout the lesson. With the inclusion of ESL strategies, students demonstrated understandings of the content more quickly. Although the researchers determined that both lessons were beneficial and used sound pedagogy, Lesson Two was more fun and easier to teach. The extra time needed to prepare this lesson saved class time because the pacing was more efficient.

An implication from these findings is the need for more and better teacher training. Teachers who work with CLD students must have comprehensive understandings of a wide variety of ESL strategies, including how to implement them based upon each student’s linguistic proficiency level. As noted in the findings, student participants indicated that the lesson with ESL strategies was preferred because it was engaging. Although some students indicated that Lesson One was preferred, their reasoning was due to the roller coaster references in the video clip used as an anticipatory set. This activity could easily be integrated in a SIOP lesson because it is engaging, visual, and helps students connect learning to something concrete. With high-quality training, teachers may be able to identify effective ESL strategies, as well as adapt and modify traditional teaching practices to accommodate CLD students instead of using the trial-and-error approach as indicated by several of the teacher participants in this study.

Limitations

There were a few limitations with the methods employed in this study that affected generalizability of findings. First, the number of student participants was small and may not universally represent the demographics of every classroom. Second, the low number of teacher participants from the two originally identified West Texas elementary schools was a limitation. Because the researchers expanded the participant base to include teachers who work with CLD students in the Texas Panhandle, they were unable to relate reported data to specific school campus and district initiatives.

Conclusion

Public schools in the United States have increasing numbers of CLD students, and teachers must know effective ways to teach these students. In this study, the researchers...
examined ESL strategies currently in use, as well as how lessons that use ESL strategies influence teaching and learning. The researchers found students to be more engaged during a lesson that included ESL strategies, and students indicated greater understandings with content presented in this lesson. Although teachers reported knowledge and use of specific ESL strategies, it is evident that more attention with professional learning was needed. Teachers who serve CLD students require continuous opportunities to learn about and practice using ESL strategies. Appropriate use of ESL strategies directly influences learning experiences among all students, especially CLD students.

References


