Supporting ELLs’ Literacy Development with Engaging, Evidence-Based Practices

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Overview of the Presentation

0 Overarching Question: Do you wonder how to best support ELLs’ literacy development while engaging students and motivating them as readers?
0 Format of the presentation:
  0 Review what the research says about effective literacy instruction for ELLs
  0 Share instructional strategies that make a difference in ELLs’ literacy development with a focus on developing reading skills
I’m looking for volunteers...

- Warm-up activity
- Looking for several volunteers who are willing to stand and speak a few lines I provide to you—no prior acting experience is required!
- This will be fun!
I Like Myself!
By Karen Beaumont

- Perform a short Readers Theatre script from the picture book *I Like Myself!*
- Andrea reads whole script aloud
- Volunteers silently read their parts and orally practice their lines on their own in ‘six inch voices’
- Practice together
- Stand and perform with gestures and expression!
Defining Terms: Literacy

- Literacy: Traditional ("dictionary") definition: “the ability to read and write” (Tompkins, 2014, p. 497).

- Maine Department of Education’s (2012) definition: “the ability to construct and convey meaning for a variety of purposes through an array of contextual forms and symbols, including reading, writing, listening, speaking, and viewing” (p. 7).
Defining Terms: Literacy (con’t)

Herrara, Perez & Escamilla (2010) also define literacy for CLD students more broadly than reading and writing:

- **Biographical**: sociocultural, linguistic, academic, and cognitive dimensions
- **Fundamental**: listening, speaking, reading and writing
- **Research-based**: phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension, and fluency
Defining Terms: Reading

“Reading is a constructive process of creating meaning that involves the reader, the text, and the purpose within social and cultural contexts (Tompkins, 2014, p. 39).

“The term reading is currently interpreted far more broadly and encompasses the learning of a complex set of strategies, skills, concepts, and knowledge enabling individuals to understand visual and print-based information presented in a variety of media or technological formats” (Reutzel & Cooter, 2015, p. 10).
Reading is “one of the most remarkable inventions in history”

“We were never born to read. Human beings invented reading only a few thousand years ago. And with this invention, we rearranged the very organization of our brain, which in turn expanded the ways we were able to think, which altered the intellectual evolution of our species” (Wolf, 2007, p. 3).

The brain’s plasticity and ability to make new connections means that we can help all students improve their literacy development through the experiences we provide them.
Defining Terms: Evidence-Based Practice

- “Evidence-based” most often refers to what scientific research has to say on a topic.
- What Works Clearinghouse began in 2002 by the Institute of Education Sciences to review ‘what works’ in education based on rigorous, scientific studies:
- A broader notion of evidence-based includes more than experimental and quasi-experimental studies, e.g. comparative and qualitative studies, practitioner inquiry—think about classroom data you gather about your students and how this evidence helps you make appropriate instructional decisions.
What Works? Evidence-Based Practices for ELLs’ Reading Achievement

- **Instructional Conversations and Literature Logs:** develop reading comprehension alongside English language proficiency; teacher facilitates small-group discussions, students write responses to stories in log and share with small group or partner.

- **Peer-Assisted Learning Strategies:** students work in pairs or small groups to provide tutoring on retelling, generating main idea statements, and generating and evaluating predictions.
Defining Terms: Engagement and Motivation

- Motivation is defined as “interrelated social and emotional dimensions that influence children’s choices to engage in reading” (p. 20).
- We cannot help any students improve their literacy skills if we cannot engage and motivate them to want to learn alongside us—we know it when we see it!
- “Student motivation is among the most powerful determiners of future reading achievement” (Reutzel & Cooter, 2015, p. 20).
Gambrell’s (2011) Seven Rules of Motivation and Engagement

1. Reading activities relevant to students’ lives
2. Access to a wide range of reading materials
3. Opportunities to engage in sustained reading
4. Opportunities to make choices about what they read and how they engage in literacy tasks
5. Opportunities to socially interact with others about the text they are reading
Gambrell’s (2011) Seven Rules of Motivation and Engagement

6. Opportunities to be successful with challenging texts
7. Classroom incentives that reflect the value and importance of reading

The overall argument: “We have to be clever enough to create classrooms where the message is clear that reading and learning are the best reward” (as cited in Reutzel & Cooter, 2015, p. 20).
What does the research say about ELLs’ and literacy?

- Short answer? Not very much.
- Research on ELLs and literacy development has been growing since 2000.
- Goldenberg (2013) argues three evidence-based claims about effective instruction for ELLs in general:
  - Generally effective practices are likely to be effective with ELs.
  - ELs require additional instructional supports.
  - Home language can be used to promote academic development.
Two Helpful IES Practice Guides Summarize Research

- *Effective Literacy and English Language Instruction for English Learners in the Elementary Grades* (2007)
- *Teaching Academic Content and Literacy to English Learners in Elementary and Middle School* (2014)

- The 2014 revision expanded grade range from K-5 to K-8 and modified recommendations
- High school level research not addressed—and this continues to be a problem
IES Practice Guide 2014: Recommendations

1. Teach a set of academic vocabulary words intensively across several days using a variety of instructional activities
2. Integrate oral and written English language instruction into content-area teaching
3. Provide regular, structured opportunities to develop written language skills
4. Provide small-group instructional intervention to students struggling in areas of literacy and English language development
Research on ELLs’ Oral Language and Reading (Goldenberg, 2010)

- Positive association between oral English proficiency and reading achievement in English (p. 689) (oral language is foundation of learning to read, so this is not surprising)
- ELLs can learn critical reading skills and concepts in English as they learn English, esp. early reading skills such as phonological awareness and decoding (p. 689)
- Rate of acquisition of skills vs. rate of reading: ELLs can learn reading skills at same rate as non-ELLs, but research is not clear about ELLs’ rate of reading progress compared with non-ELLs (p. 690)
Research on ELLs’ First Language and Reading (Goldenberg, 2010)

- Several meta-analyses have reached the same conclusion: “Teaching students to read in the L1 promotes reading achievement in the L2 in comparison to teaching students to read in the L2 exclusively” (author’s emphasis, p. 691).
- Same meta-analyses also concluded that primary language instruction also promotes higher literacy levels in L1.
- Effect sizes are modest and apply to elementary and secondary students (far fewer secondary studies).
- Incredibly unique to have such consensus!
L1 and L2 Reading: Many Questions Remain...

- Is primary language instruction more beneficial for some learners? In some settings? With certain ELL populations? What’s the right balance of developing L1 knowledge/skills and English language proficiency? What L1 skill does a teacher need to possess to be effective? (p. 693).

- NOTE: policies that block or limit L1 use in the classroom are not evidence-based
Research on ELLs and Reading Instruction in L2 (Goldenberg, 2010)

- Research on teaching reading to ELLs in English as not as solid as L1 reading instruction.
- Two complementary conclusions in the research literature:
  1. What we know about effective reading curriculum and instruction in general tends to be true for ELLs.
  2. When instructed in English, ELLs require modifications or supports, primarily due to limited proficiency in English (p. 694).
The Five Pillars of Evidence-Based Reading Instruction (NRP, 2000)

- Phonemic Awareness: ability to manipulate sounds in words orally
- Phonics: learning and applying predictable relationships between phonemes and graphemes (decoding)
- Fluency: reading accurately, quickly, and with expression
- Vocabulary: understanding words and their (multiple) meanings
- Comprehension: process of constructing meaning from a text
Evidence-Based, Engaging Practice: Readers Theatre

- Readers Theatre exemplifies the repeated reading technique that is highly recommended by the NRP for improving fluency.
- Choral reading is another repeated reading technique that works well with ELLs.
Evidence-Based, Engaging Practice: Reading Aloud

- NRP research confirms that students need to hear models of fluent reading in order to improve their fluency.
- NRP research also confirms that most vocabulary is learned incidentally, making reading independently, with a partner, or with the teacher extremely valuable for promoting word learning and comprehension.
Read, read, read!

- No one has become a better reader by not reading.
- All students need texts at their independent level to be successful at reading on their own.
- Independent level: 95% or greater accuracy
- Instructional level: 90-94% accuracy
- Frustration level: 89% or lower accuracy
Evidence-Based, Engaging Practice: Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

- Word learning can definitely be fun! Especially working with multiple meaning words (e.g. bar, run, up)
- Pre-teach words as necessary
- During read alouds, think aloud and show students how to determine word meanings using context clues: distinguish among directive, nondirective, misdirective contexts
- Have students self-select vocabulary words they want to learn; add to personal vocabulary journals/word banks, and/or classroom word walls
- Alphabet Books and Frayer Model for words students should understand deeply
References


Session Wrap Up

Comments, questions, concerns?
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