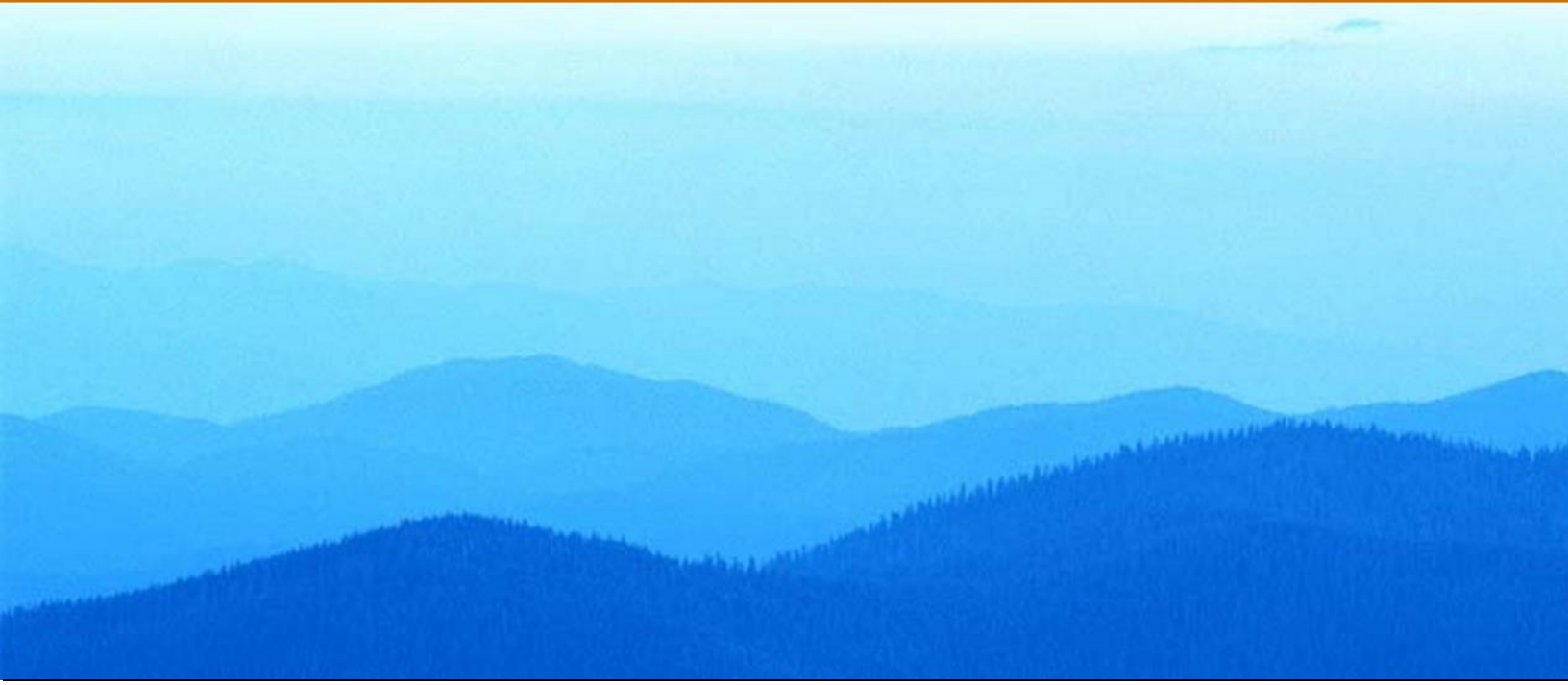

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Editor

Editorial Board

The *Language Experience Forum* Journal is a refereed journal of the Language Experience Special Interest Group of the International Literacy Association. The journal is aimed at teachers of literacy at all levels. It provides a forum for discussion of ideas and issues related to the teaching of literacy to all groups of students and across multiple disciplinary areas.

Submit articles to the editor: faziom@nsula.edu

Table of Contents

From the Field:

Bengali ELL Students: Promoting Targeted Adjective Activities and Vocabulary Expansion

Dorothy H. Idris, Ed.D.,
Formally School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Mary W. Strong, Ed.D. Professor Emerita,
Widener University, Chester, PA

Abstract

This study examined the vocabulary development of two middle school non-native students who were beginner speakers of English enrolled in a suburban school district. The two students were of low socioeconomic status (SES), and their country of origin was Bangladesh. The purpose of the study was to determine how the use of intensive vocabulary instruction that included a focus on teaching adjective order and using visual images, repetition, and writing would promote language acquisition of at risk English language learners (ELL).

Introduction

The implementation of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) in school settings has brought strain upon teachers who work with struggling English Language Learners. Since the standards in literacy are more demanding, ELL students may have more difficulty achieving the same academic success as their fellow students (Johnson, & Wells, 2017). The emphasis on language and literacy is very pronounced (Duguay, et al, 2013, p. 2), and ELL students need fundamental training in the basics of the English

language if they are to successfully compete with native speakers of English in regular classroom settings.

Some aspects of language proficiency are more relevant for students' cognitive and academic progress. It is essential that teachers start teaching language where the students are in their linguistic development. Additionally, in terms of vocabulary development, ELL students may have the vocabulary to hold a conversation about weekend activities but might not have the vocabulary to comprehend a science or social studies text (Strong & Idris, 2016). Therefore, instruction in the use of rudimentary language skills such as learning to use adjectives is an important strategy that these students must learn.

Background

Two Bengali middle school students are the focus of this study. Ejairo and Luazero (pseudonyms) attended a suburban school in the Mid-Atlantic States.

Ejairo. Ejairo was a 10 year old Southern Asian Bengali Muslim male. He was good-looking, short, slightly built, and unhurried with shiny thick black hair and sad, haunting, piercing black eyes such that he looked like he could be a poster boy for one of those popular television commercials for unfortunate children in third world countries. He was usually generally somber, but pleasant. He was undersized for his age, appearing to be more like a seven year old child than a ten year old fourth grade energetic boy. At the start of the study, he was quiet and rarely spoke or responded in class. He would ask and allow siblings or other Bengali students to translate or speak for him. Ironically, the Bengali students became so accustomed to speaking for Ejairo that they became somewhat resentful when Ejairo started speaking up for himself. Ejairo was one of six

children—each born on average two years apart. He had three brothers and two sisters. He was the youngest male child of the family. Before coming to the United States, he had not received any formal education, as the family lived in the countryside and was isolated from urban civilization.

Political and religious unrest in his providence in Bangladesh caused his family to seek refugee status in the United States. An American human rights group arranged for their transportation to the United States, and they literally came to America with nothing but the clothes on their backs. The leader of the Bangladesh group was the family's spokesperson and translator. Everyone in the family called him “Uncle.” They lived in a group home set up by the human rights organization, but operated by Bengali overseers.

Ejairo’s father took care of the children because his mother was often hospitalized with mental and emotional illness. Her hospitalization occurred routinely during the winter months, because every year she recalled that one of her children had died during this season. She was unable to cope with the memory and suffered nervous breakdowns. While the father worked at a restaurant in an entry level job, Ejairo’s youngest sister (a toddler) was watched by another Bengali mother living in the compound.

It appeared that Ejairo was neglected whenever his mother was in the hospital, and her hospitalization impacted his behavior in school. He came to school wearing dirty clothes, and noticeably, he had not showered. He was also sent to the nurse with a severe case of head lice. Consequently, he and his siblings’ hair had to be shaved. All five children in the family attending the Target School had recurring outbreaks of lice, body odors, and unclean clothes. During his mother’s hospitalization, Ejairo seemed to have lost his sense of concentration and fell behind in his studies. His behavior became an

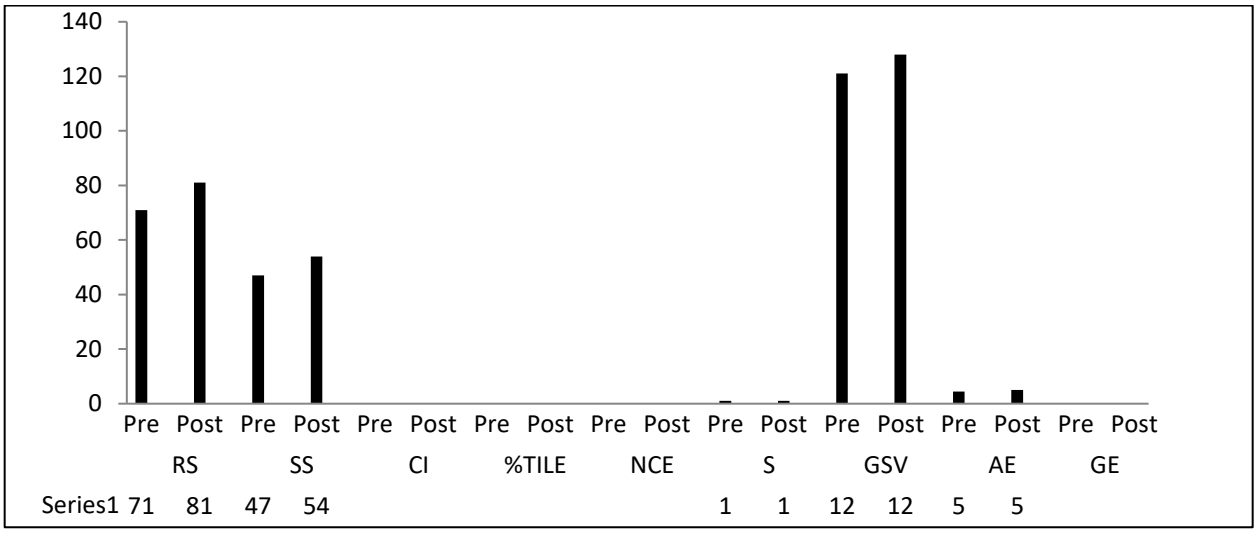
issue as well. He would interrupt other students in the middle of their answers loudly with an alternate response. Invariably, his response was incorrect, but that did not deter him from yelling out his answers. When he was called on to respond, his answer to “What group does a lion belong to?” was “He runs fast.” Clearly, the answer did not reflect comprehension of the question. Moreover, the level and tone of his voice was shrill and hostile.

Often, Ejairo seemed to exhibit behaviors that might suggest that he was also hearing impaired. Because he had a speech impediment, it was not clear if he was imitating the behavior of another participant in the study (Luazero), or he could not gauge how loudly he was talking. At these times, he had to be reminded to lower his voice and to stop calling out. Tests and bench mark scores were not available for Ejairo because he did not have the ability to take any tests for two years. Teachers had given him written assessments, but school records verified that his abilities were “too low to be evaluated.”

Notwithstanding his delays, Ejairo made progress on the PPVT -™4 (see Figure 1). His scores improved moderately from pretest to posttest; his Raw Score (RS) increased by 14.08 percent, his Standard Score (SS) resulted in a 14.89 percent growth, and the Growth Scale Value (GSV) showed a 5.78 percent gain. Not shown are his age equivalent and grade equivalent scores. However, if he were to be compared to the norm in these categories, his Age Equivalent (AE) was 4.5 at the start of the study, but in 10 weeks, his maturity level rose to that of a 5 year old student, (i.e., an 11.11 percent growth in maturity). As to his grade equivalency, he was still immeasurable at the conclusion of the study.

Figure 1

PPVT -™4 Pre Posttest Scores Case 1: Ejairo



Score Summary Key: RS = Raw Score; SS = Standard Score; CI = Confidence Interval; % = Percentile; NCE = Normal Curve Equivalent; S = Stanine; GSV = Growth Scale Value; AE = Age Equivalent; GE = Grade Equivalent

Luazero. Luazero was an 11 year old Southern Asian Bengali Muslim male. He was a handsome, tall, thin, awkwardly lanky boy with abundant shiny black hair and coal black twinkling eyes. He possessed a generally playful and affable personality. Considering his age, he had an uncharacteristically childish disposition that often disturbed his classmates. They were quite vocal in expressing their disapproval when Luazero exhibited disruptive juvenile behavior. Luazero was the youngest and only male child of three children. One sister was married and still lived in Bangladesh. The younger sister was unmarried and worked in the United States.

The “Uncle” explained that the family came to the United States in 2007 to escape the civil and political unrest that was occurring between political organizations and

industrial group demonstrations which frequently and quickly turned violent. During such civil unrests, explosives and firearms were sometimes used. The family was deeply troubled by six students who died in the Bangladesh revolution with the Pakistanis. The parents lived in the same community as they did. Though the war had occurred before Luazero was born, he was afraid that something like that might happen to them. The new era of social uprisings since 2000 reminded them of that history, and so the father fearing for the safety of his family, applied for refugee status and received an entry visa to enter the United States under the auspices of a Bengali Human Rights organization. The family was relocated and lived in the shared multifamily dwelling for several years until the father of the other Bengali family living with them was able to secure a better job and moved his family out of the compound.

In 2011, Luazero's mother died. In the interview, the cause of her death was not made clear. Within six months, his father returned to Bangladesh and married a woman who had been introduced to him as a candidate for an arranged marriage. He married his new bride on the same day as Luazero's oldest sister's three year old child died. Consequently, the extended Bangladesh family was quite upset about the perceived insensitivity Luazero's father displayed in marrying again on the day his granddaughter died. The family felt it was too soon after the mother had died for the father to remarry. His father remained in Bangladesh for several months after his marriage, but eventually returned to the United States with his new bride.

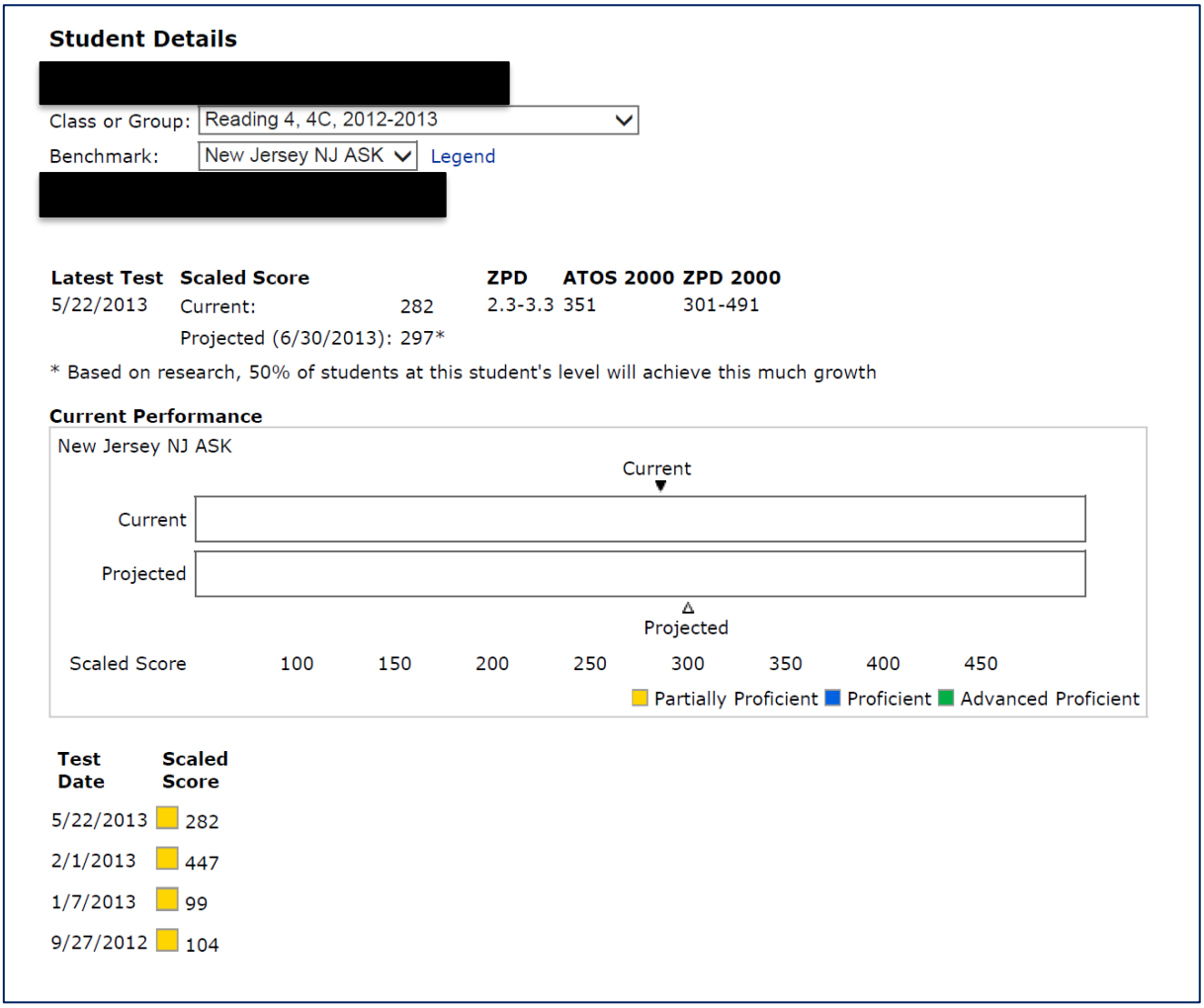
During the time his father was in Bangladesh establishing a new life, Luazero's older sister assumed the responsibilities of the house. She tried to compensate for the loss of their mother by giving Luazero money every day for spending on whatever he

liked. Naturally, Luazero bought candy with the money. While the sister tried to care for him, he came to school unkempt and sometimes had body odor. While he was never absent, no one at home monitored his attendance, so he was often late for school and, subsequently, to the ELL class. The other Bengali students living in the compound were always on time. While the school offered a free breakfast, he would not eat it, but rather relied on eating the candy he bought from the corner store on the way to school. Having eaten the candy, Luazero was hyperactive when he came to class and was often quite disruptive. Surprisingly, he was very affectionate especially for a tall lanky “all-boy boy.” He often called the investigator “Grandmother,” a possible indicator that he was missing a nurturing maternal model in the home.

Luazero arrived in the United States having completed the second grade in Bangladesh. No records were attainable for his progress and development. However, he had no prior English education. Academically (from mandated enrollment assessment results), he was identified as requiring English language support services. His standardized state performance tests scores (ASK) were unacceptable in language arts (see Figure 2). However, he performed on grade level for mathematics and was very proud of his ability in math. Conversely, test scores, bench marks, and progress reports did not reflect academic acuity, (e.g., DRA 4; MAP 157 (Group Norm 199).

Figure 2

ASK Test Results for Luazero

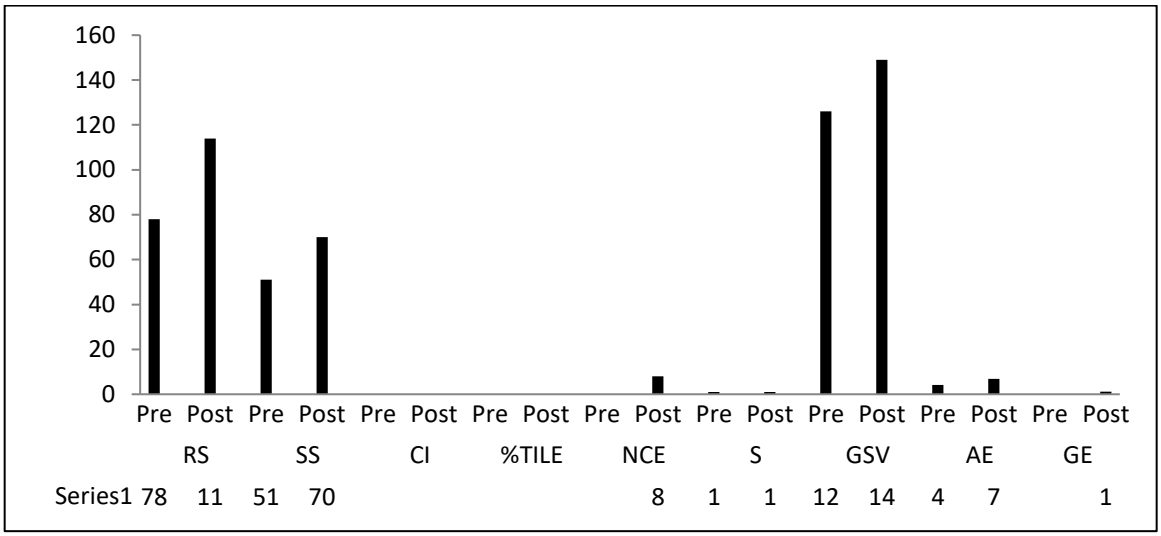


Luazero's surface immaturity probably played a role in his scores on the PPVT -™4 (see Figure 3). On the pretest, he tested comparable to a 4 year old preschooler. The results of the posttest show that his AE rose to age seven, resulting in a 75 percent growth. These results could have been another example of the effects mood and emotion had on his academic achievement. It was difficult to determine if his vocabulary growth was due solely to a genuine increase in knowledge or emotional and behavioral effects.

Luazero's RS for the PPVT -™4 advanced 46.15 percent, SS improved by 37.24 percent, and his GSV showed a gain of 18.25 percent.

Figure 3

PPVT -™4 Pre Posttest Scores Case 16: Luazero



Score Summary Key: RS = Raw Score; SS = Standard Score; CI = Confidence Interval; % = Percentile; NCE = Normal Curve Equivalent; S = Stanine; GSV = Growth Scale Value; AE = Age Equivalent; GE = Grade Equivalent

Procedures

Ejairo and Luazero participated in a rigorous comprehensive ten-week remedial program. The intervention involved thematic vocabulary lessons augmented with pictures, illustrations, and objects (Sadeghi, & Farzizadeh, 2012). The two Bengali students were exposed to a variety of differentiated learning strategies which encouraged them to describe words using adjectives in oral and in written forms. While participating in the intensive ten-week program, both of the participants' vocabulary progress was constantly monitored and recorded through observation and unit quizzes.

Learning strategies. The intervention for Ejairo and Luazero emphasized vocabulary development using adjectives as a vehicle by which to encourage increased oral and written expression. Word walls, role-playing, songs and games that focusing on target words for the day were used. The students were provided sight word development and pronunciation of words. While learning strategies highlighted vocabulary development, other literacy and language learning content areas could not be neglected because they are all interconnected. The following strategies were crucial to the students' ability to acquire English language skills: 1) decoding, 2) adjectives, 3) vocabulary activities and exercises, 4) comprehension, 5) modeling, and 6) writing.

Decoding. Teaching initial decoding skills was very important since the students had little to no formal academic training. Instruction began with alphabet and sound-symbol relationships. Skills, vocabulary, and mechanics were combined in the delivery of instruction due to time constraints. For example, vocabulary linked to emotions and feelings was taught concurrently with teaching and/or reviewing the alphabet and corresponding sounds. The teacher dramatically demonstrated reciting the alphabet using facial and body language to express sadness, happiness, illness, anger, excitement, etc. Students would then follow suit and practice saying the alphabet as well as learn new words subliminally. The students readily understood the thematic vocabulary because they could see the "action" of the targeted words, while at the same time, reinforce the order and pronunciation of the letters of the alphabet.

Other examples of decoding skills strategies included essentials such as showing how paired vowels are formed and pronounced and presenting common spelling patterns so that students would be able to spell words correctly when they hear certain sounds,

because they would be able to identify the individual sounds making up the word (i.e., the syllables), and predict the spelling even if they had never seen the word or did not yet know the meaning of the word (e.g., “information” is composed of several smaller words easy to understand: “in,” “for,” “may,” “tion”). While the student may incorrectly misspell the third syllable in the word “mā,” most of the word would be spelled correctly, and one would be able to easily understand what the student was trying to write.

Adjectives. Ejairo and Luazero were shown adjective order and were presented with specific adjectives following the categories of adjectives in both written and oral forms. The teacher routinely demonstrated how adjectives clarify and embellish sentences, allowing for clearer communication. Retelling Language Experience Approach (LEA) student stories and using as many adjectives as possible in the description of words used in the stories were other activities that were employed. Practice with games like “Add an Adjective” (Provide a noun and ask students to add an adjective to it) was also included. Similarly, such games allowed students to theoretically expand sentences from basic subject, verb, and object (SVO) patterns to (adj⇨SV⇨adj∞⇨O) patterns to infinity. An abbreviated guide to the Adjective Activities used in this project is located in Appendix A.

Vocabulary activities and exercises. Researchers assert that students need multiple experiences with a word to internalize it. They advise teachers to employ many types of vocabulary reinforcement activities (Biemiller, & Boote, 2006; Gunning, 2012; Horst, Parsons, & Bryan, 2011). Examples of the teacher’s learning experience approach (LEA) included explicit teacher talk, studying high-frequency words in context, thinking aloud during instructional activities, dramatizing, pantomiming, and illustrating concepts

with visual aids. Added were sharing poetry, singing, games, and a field trip to a theater. Encouraging class discussions by sharing stories and experiences in an LEA writing exercise rounded out a plethora of activities used by the teacher to foster vocabulary acquisition and oral competency.

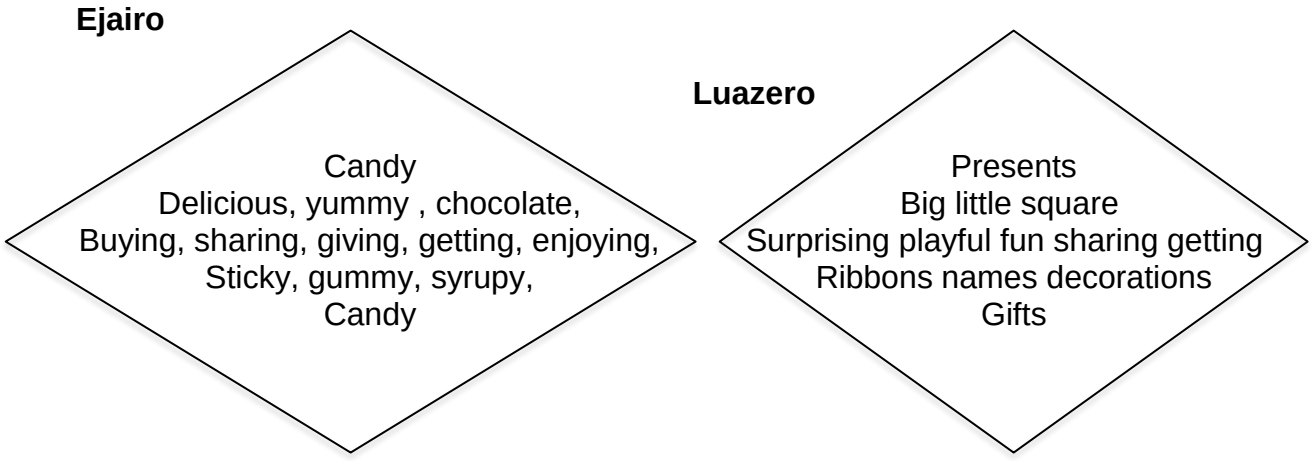
Comprehension. In order to promote comprehension, thoughtfully selected quality books in a variety of genres for the student to read were provided. It was necessary to carefully selected texts to target students' vocabulary development. Encouraging students to interact and respond to texts was routinely practiced. The teacher allowed the students to explore and self-select books at their independent reading levels and according to their personal preferences. Understandably, Ejairo and Luazero preferred to read graphic books about sports, cars, pop culture (music and movies), or dinosaurs. The teacher also helped the students to understand what makes a book "easy" or "hard."

Modeling. The teacher modeled phrasing and the pronunciation of difficult words and sounds. In addition, the teacher demonstrated how to express a text well, to read it with feeling that matches what it means through the practice of intonation, and to read with expression. In this manner, students were better able to understand the text. In order to match the proper expression to each word or phrase, she used pantomime and drama techniques to model these concepts. These strategies were especially important for Ejairo and Luazero because their native language does not vary in tone, and many sounds are guttural, originating in the lower part of their throat. The students were not in the habit of manipulating their tongue or lips to make clear distinctive rhythmic sounds, as is characteristic of English pronunciation.

Writing. Many opportunities were provided for students to write, and technology was used as tool for studying vocabulary and writing. Recognizing that even native speakers of English can have difficulty deciding on a topic, the teacher encouraged students to write about something they like and commonly experience. She also scaffolded writing by providing formulas, such as the one for a diamante poem. Asked to write a modified diamante peom, Ejairo and Luazero followed a formula where the first thing they had to do was pick a noun that was, by design, the first and last one word sentence in the poem. The second and fourth lines were composed of adjectives, and the third line was to consist of verbs ending in -ing. As can be seen in Luazero's poem in Figure 4, he used another noun (a synonym) in the last line, writing "Gifts" rather than "Presents." He also used a mix of adjectives and verbs in line 3.

Figure 4

Diamante Writing Samples



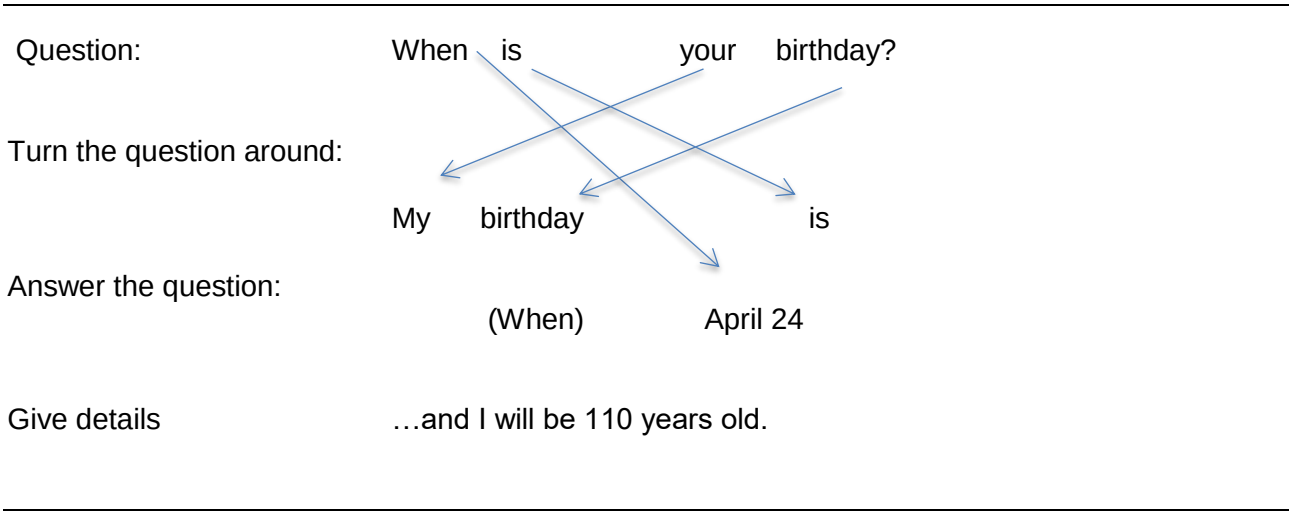
Monitoring. Though the teacher implemented the rigorous intervention for the short period of 10 weeks, the teacher worked with the students for an entire school year in order to ascertain how much students applied the interventions to their classroom experiences after the intervention. The opportunity to regularly monitor students for progress after the intervention was conducted was fruitful. Informal tests and other evaluation materials provided a variety of assessment tools and strategies to gather relevant functional, developmental and academic information about the ELL students including information provided by the surrogate "Uncle" and parent. These evaluation tools included presentations that allowed students to talk, listen, read, and write in literacy journals. Journal writing allowed the teacher to monitor the progress and development of students' written language learning over the course of the academic year. A major review of the students' work resulted in progress reports to the parents. The progress described the areas in which the students had made progress or had become proficient and the areas of difficulty where the students continued to struggle. The teacher was then able to modify instruction to meet individual needs. Moreover, she was able to observe firsthand how students used the strategies taught to them in the 10-week intervention.

An example of a strategy taught that Ejairo and Luazero seemed to internalize well was that of the TAG method: T (turn questions around), A (answer the question), and G (give details) (Kirby, 2016). When speaking, they would utter one word responses to questions even if the question required a constructed response. Ejairo especially had difficulty in speaking in complete sentences. Once they were introduced to the TAG strategy and were required to speak in full sentences, they applied this strategy to their

responses with success. Figure 3 TAG - *A Strategy for Answering Questions* illustrates how the strategy functions in practice (Kirby, 2016).

Figure 3

TAG - A Strategy for Answering Questions



Results and Discussion

The participants in the study became active learners of academically relevant content versus learning through the rote memorization of word lists. Modeling for students and teaching methodically were used to clarify word meaning and provide students opportunities to use words in context and in oral and written language (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2008). Consequently, oral language development, content learning, and literacy development supported one another via the instruction intervention.

The intervention involved thematic vocabulary lessons augmented with pictures, illustrations, and objects (Sadeghi, & Farzizadeh, 2012). The two Bengali students were exposed to a variety of differentiated learning strategies that encouraged them to describe words using adjectives in oral and in written forms. While participating in the intensive

ten-week program, both participants' vocabulary progress was constantly monitored and recorded through observation and unit quizzes.

In Appendix B, one of Ejairo's first attempts at writing is illustrated. Note that he said, "I have so much bad English; I was feel bad. I make a lot of mistakes, but it was fun." He did use five adjectives in his poem. In Figure 4, one of Ejairo's writing pieces at the end of the ten-week session is illustrated. He indicated, "Now I had good feeling to write without feeling bad. I know lots of words now." He used 13 adjectives in this final piece. As noted in his comments, he felt more confident and indicates that he knows many more words.

In Appendix C, one of Luazero's first pieces of writing is illustrated. Afterward, he said, "I read the book in three weeks, I read fun things. Miss teacher help me, and I tried to write, But I don't spell. I don't think to spell is important." He made 13 spelling errors in this piece. In Figure 6, by contrast, there are only three spelling errors. He also used 10 adjectives in this piece. Luazero made these comments, "I read the book in three weeks, I read fun things. Miss teacher help me, and I tried to write, But I don't spell. I don't think to spell is important." Notice that both students' attitudes toward the writing process changed positively at the end of the sessions.

Both students made advances on the PPVT-™4 post scores. Ejairo made moderate progress in his Raw Scores, Standard Scores, and Growth Scale Value. His Age Equivalent also grew slightly. Luazero gained a 75 percent growth in his Age Equivalent. His Raw Score almost doubled, and he showed progress in his Standard Scores and Growth Value.

Considering that both students had many adjustments and academic issues when they first began the program, it can be noted that improvement was made. This was only a 10 week intervention, but it seemed to aid the students in gaining skills and in feeling more confident.

Conclusion

The study indicated that robust vocabulary instruction incorporated in lessons on adjective order, clarified by visual images, and taught routinely and consistently, improved students' vocabulary ability and reading comprehension improved. Students were also presented with practical "hands on experiences" and were encouraged to read, speak about, and write in journals daily about their experiences. All provided a rich learning experience that lasted well beyond the 10 weeks of the intervention.

The teacher has monitored the progress of Ejairo and Luazero since the study. Now, three years later, both students attend junior high school in regular classroom settings. Ejairo, though still soft spoken, is no longer shy. His speech yet lacks clarity, but it is much improved, and his current teacher reports that he remembers to speak in full sentences. Luazero is no longer loud and disruptive and continues to excel in math. He has also developed an interest in science and now aspires to attend college as a biology major. He has lost his heavy accent and speaks in American slang much of the time.

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Appendix A

Sample List of Adjective Activities

Adjective Bingo
Student creates own Bingo boards for an adjective review game. Adjective categories: shapes, sizes, colors, textures, quantity, quality, opinion, etc. When student wins bingo, student must write sentences using the adjectives in the winning row correctly.
Time: Two 10 min sessions. Levels: 4 - 8

Adjective Brainstorm
Student is shown a picture and asked to write as many adjectives as possible within a minute describing the picture. Time: One 10 min session. Levels: K - 8

Adjective Match Up
With index cards, student creates a set of adjectives by writing an adjective on each card in the matching photos that the teacher has. Teacher shows picture to student, and student must match the card to the picture. Magazine pictures, travel brochures, pictures printed from the internet were used. Time: Three 10 min sessions. Levels K - 1

Who Am I?
Student writes a list of adjectives which describe a single friend or family member. The adjectives describe appearance and personality (both good and bad).
Theme: Describing people. Time: One 10 min session. Levels: 4 - 8

Pen Pals
Student writes a letter to a pen pal and describes his or her home. Adjective categories: size, shape, texture, and color. Time: Two 10 min sessions. Levels: 4 -5

Adjectives: Degrees of "Color" Intensity
Student is given a pair of adjectives which have similar meanings but are of different intensity. Examples: hungry/starving, angry/furious, tired/exhausted, small/tiny, big/gigantic, sad/miserable, smart/brilliant, or bad/horrible. On a light color of paper, student wrote the adjective that had the lesser intensity and then wrote the more intense adjective on the darker card. Time: Two 10 min sessions. Levels: 7- 8

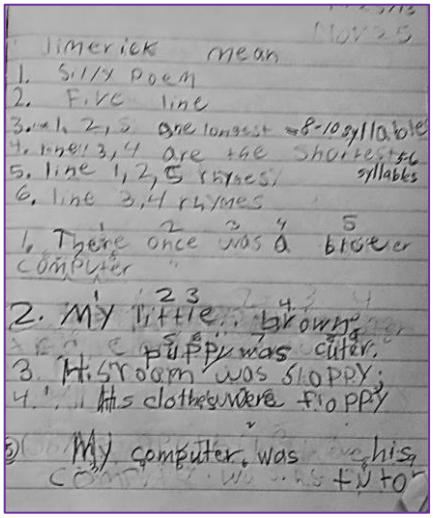
Expanding Sentences
Student is given a set of simple sentences on the board. Example Simple Sentence: The girl is playing a game. Student is challenged to add adjectives to the sentence, one at a time, to make a more interesting sentence. Student is reminded to write the correct order in which to place the adjective. Time: One 10 min session. Levels: K – 8

Appendix B

Case Study Overview Ejairo

Vocabulary and Adjectives: Modeling problem-solving strategies with new vocabulary; routinely demonstrate how adjectives clarify and embellish sentences allowing for clearer communication

Case 1: EJAIRO



I HAVE SO MUCH BAD ENGLISH; I WAS FEEL BAD. I MAKE A LOT OF MISTAKES, BUT IT WAS FUN.

SHARED WRITING: Demonstrating revision, editing, elaboration, and conventions.

Literacy Objective: Describe how words and phrases (e.g., regular beats, alliteration, rhymes, repeated lines) supply rhythm and meaning in a story, poem, or song

Oral Language Development Goal: Encourage student's self-expression.

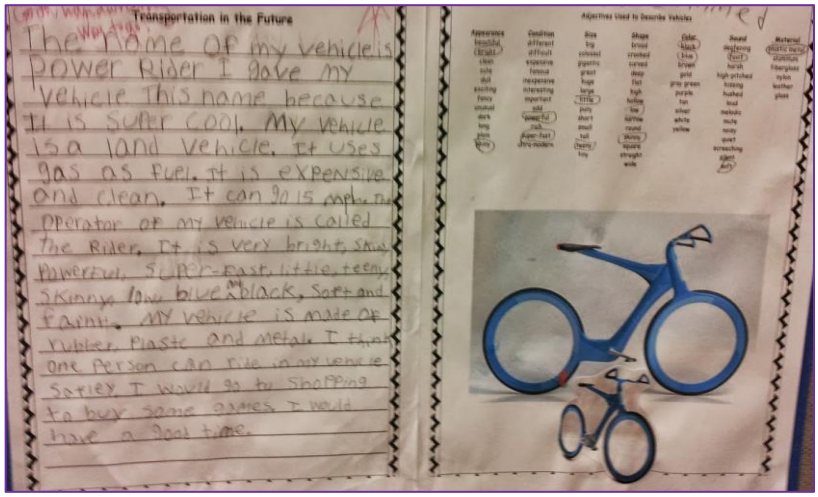
Guided Writing Goal: Produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose.

NOW I HAD GOOD FEELING TO WRITE WITHOUT FEELING BAD. I KNOW LOTS OF WORDS NOW.

Literacy Objective: Develop creative and imaginative thinking ability.

Oral Language Development Goal: Develop skills in retelling and using as many adjectives as possible in the description of words.

Writing Goal: Improve writing by effectively using writing strategies.



Vocabulary Goal: Demonstrate appropriate use of adjectives and their order in writing

comprehensible statements about vehicles used for transportation.

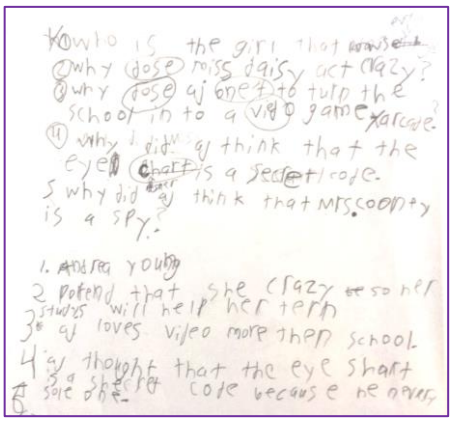
Motivational Prompt: Select a vehicle from photos or design your own that reminds you of the future and describe the vehicle in detail

Appendix C

Case Study Overview Luazero

Small Group Reading Instruction: Carefully selecting texts to target students' vocabulary development; assessing authentically and frequently

Case 2: Luazero



I READ BOOK IN THREE WEEKS, I READ FUN THINGS. MISS TEACHER HELP ME, AND I TRIED TO WRITE, BUT I DON'T SPELL. I DON'T THINK TO SPELL IS IMPORTANT.

My Weird School by Dan Gutman (2004)

The main character is Arlo Jervis, known as "A.J." He attends Ella Mentry School, but he dislikes school. His archenemy is Andrea Young, but secretly he has a crush on her.

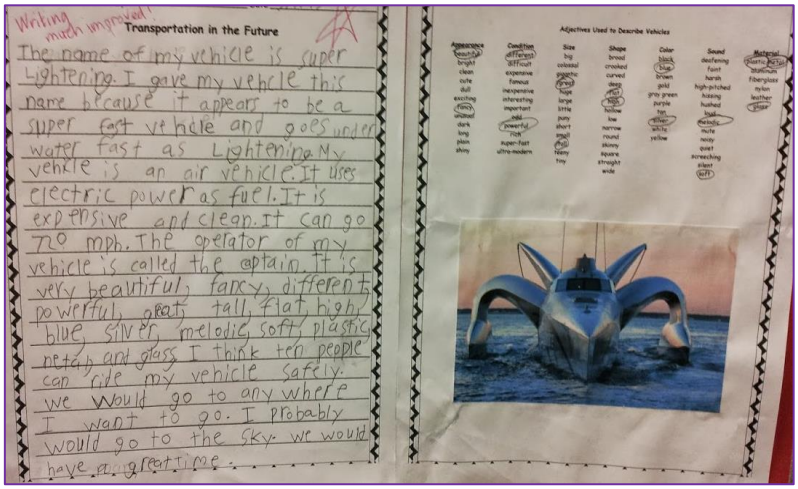
Literary Objective: Improve comprehension and develop critical thinking skills.

Oral Language Development Goal: Ask questions.

Motivational Prompt: What questions would you ask from reading this humorous book written in first-person narrative style?

Independent Writing: Providing time for practice, response, and reflection

I CAN REALLY WRITE NOW; MISS TEACHER MADE ME SPELL AND WRITE GOOD. I STILL DON'T LIKE TO SPELL, BUT MY PAPER LOOK GOOD NOW.



Literacy Objective: Develop creative and imaginative thinking ability.

Oral Language Development Goal: Retell and use as many adjectives as possible in the description of words.

Writing Goal: Improve writing by the effectively using writing strategies.

Vocabulary Goal: Demonstrate appropriate use of adjectives and their order in writing comprehensible statements about vehicles used for transportation.

From the Field:

Maximizing Learning through Multisensory Play: Building Preschoolers' Language Skills through Sensory Play Activities

Michelle Fazio-Brunson
Northwestern State University

Katrina Jordan
Northwestern State University

Allison Covington
M.Ed. Candidate, Northwestern State University

"Play is practice for real life" (Parlakian & MacLaughlin, 2018, para. 11).

As Piaget (1962) famously proclaimed many years ago, play is the work of children. Through play, children develop *physical skills* as they strengthen gross and small motor muscles, *social skills* as they learn to cooperate with others, *emotional skills* as they build self-esteem and self-efficacy, and *cognitive skills* as they use their senses to make discoveries and learn about the world around them (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2007; Parlakian & MacLaughlin, 2018). Play can also be an important tool for encouraging young children's language and literacy development. According to Wasik & Jacobi-Vessels (2017, p. 769), "…adults' participation in children's play is critical in their development, especially their language development." To that end, this article describes how to use sensory play activities to create meaningful play experiences which contribute to preschoolers' language and literacy development.

Developmentally Appropriate Practice, Language Development, and Sensory Play in the Preschool Years

Research has consistently shown that young children learn best when they are actively engaged in developmentally appropriate experiences (NAEYC, 2009), and this includes play. “Play is a crucial feature in developing early literacy for young children because it helps them to interpret their experiences. Play allows young children to assume the roles and activities of more accomplished peers and adults” (International Literacy Association, 2018, p. 4). Oddo and Castleberry (2013) further assert that the more preschoolers are engaged in their play, the more likely they are to expand their language.

Language development is particularly important in the early years because of the impact it has on other developmental domains. “Developing oral language comprehension and engaging children in meaningful oral discourse is crucial because it gives meaning to what [young children] are learning” (International Literacy Association, 2018, p. 3). Structured properly, sensory play can help young children develop language skills (Matteson, 2016). Sensory play activities incorporate children’s visual (seeing), auditory (hearing), tactile (touching), olfactory (smelling), and gustatory (tasting) senses as they manipulate materials which vary in texture, size, color, and sensation (Wittmer, Peterson, & Puckett, 2017).

Careful observation of young children’s play provides a window through which teachers can assess children’s language skills. For example, as children play with sensory materials, they describe what is happening in their play, communicate to ask for help with tools, share exciting findings with their peers, and resolve conflicts (Parlakian & MacLaughlin, 2018). Sensory play not only provides pathways for learning language in

typically developing children, but it can also serve as early intervention for children with special rights, including those with behavioral challenges. In fact, a multisensory approach is often used to teach language to students with dyslexia (Kelly & Phillips, 2016).

To promote development across domains, preschool teachers should provide opportunities for listening and speaking as well as offer open-ended activities and sensory materials to encourage language development. In fact, research on developmentally appropriate environments for young children calls for materials which "provide a variety of tactile sensory stimulation" (Gestwicki, 2017, p. 183). Thoughtful and intentional selection of these materials can help early childhood teachers integrate sensory play activities in their instruction. In the next section, sample sensory play activities which promote early language skills in *Louisiana's Birth to Five Early Learning and Development Standards* are described.

Meeting Early Language and Literacy Standards through Sensory Play Activities

Presented in this section are simple sensory activities which promote language and literacy development, and all the activities can be prepared with common household/classroom items. Teachers who do not have access to sensory bins can substitute plastic storage bins, baking pans, cookie sheets, or large trays. Teachers can also choose from a variety of dyes, including traditional food color, liquid water color, gel food color (for richer colors), or natural/plant-based food color. Care should be taken to select materials that do not pose choking hazards for young children who tend to mouth small objects.

https://www.pinterest.com/pin/499477414896525509/

Sensory Activity: Colored Pasta

Standard: LL 1 Comprehend or understand and use language

Indicator: Listen and respond attentively to conversations. (4.2)

Materials: Multiple bags of dried pasta, rubbing alcohol, food color, gallon-size plastic zip bags, newspaper, and sensory tub

Preparation: Put one bag of pasta into each zip bag. Add ¼ cup alcohol and 4 squirts of food color to each bag. Close the bag, and "squish" the liquid to coat the pasta. Repeat as necessary to make as many bags as you wish. Let the bags sit for about 10-15 minutes, moving the contents around every few minutes to spread the color. Pour the pasta out onto sheets of newspaper, spread it out, and let it dry.

Activity: Place the dried pasta into a tub, bin, or tray. Invite the children to explore the pasta. Engage them in conversation as they play. Sample questions: *Have you ever seen pasta like this before? How does the pasta feel in your hands? What*

does the pasta remind you of that you may have at your house? How does the pasta sound when you scoop it in your hands?

Variation: Add tools such as scoops, spoons, and bowls for filling and dumping.

http://mineforthemaking.com/2011/08/colorful-rice-sensory-bin.html

Sensory Activity: Colored Rice

Standard: LL 1 Comprehend or understand and use language

Indicator: With guidance and support from adults, follow agreed upon rules for discussions (e.g. listening to others, and taking turns speaking about topics and print under discussion). (4.3)

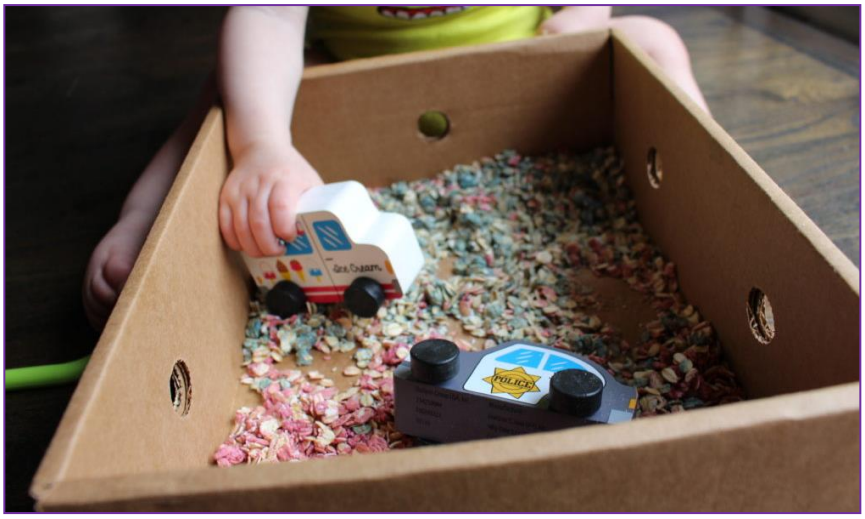
Materials: 5 pound bag of white rice, gel food color, rubbing alcohol, container with lid, gallon-size plastic zip bags, and sensory bin

Preparation: Separate rice into 4 zip bags. Add one color of gel food color to each bag until you reach the desired color. Close the bags, and mix the rice and gel food color until the rice is coated. Add a small amount of rubbing alcohol to each bag to

set the dye, and let it dry for 24 hours.

Activity: Place the dried rice into the sensory bin. Model for the children how to play with the rice appropriately. Engage the children in conversation as they play, encouraging them to take turns. Sample questions: *Have you ever played with rice like this before? What does this rice make you think of? How does the rice feel when you scoop it in your hands?*

Variation: Add tools such as scoops, cups, shovels, rakes and bowls.



http://runlikekale.com/sensory-play-babies-colored-oats/

Sensory Activity: Colored Oats

Standard: LL 1 Comprehend or understand and use language

Indicator: Speak audibly and use words, phrases, and/or sentences to express a complete thought that can be clearly understood by most people. (4.5)

Materials: 6 cups of oats (1 cup for each color), water, bowl, food color, paper towel, and sensory tub

Preparation: In a bowl, mix 2 Tbsp. of water with 8-10 drops of food color. Add oats—the liquid should just coat the oats. When the oats are all coated, pour them on a paper towel to dry for about an hour.

Activity: Place the colored oats into the sensory bin. Provide manipulatives and tools (e.g., wooden cars, scoops, measuring cups, funnels, and bowls) for the children to use while they explore. Engage them in conversation as they play, encouraging them to express complete thoughts. Model complete thoughts in your own speech, and expand on the children's thoughts. Sample questions: *Have you ever seen oats like this before? What sounds do the oats make when you are playing with them? How can you use the funnel to fill the bowl with oats?*

Variation: Change out tools and other manipulatives used. Add a few drops of essential oil the water and food color in the first step to scent the oats.

http://www.andnextcomesl.com/2014/07/rainbow-chickpeas-how-to-dye-dried.html

Sensory Activity: Colored Chickpeas

Standard: LL 1 Comprehend or understand and use language

Indicator: Ask questions about a specific topic, activity, and/or text read aloud. (4.6)

Materials: large bag of dried chickpeas, liquid food color, gallon-size plastic zip bags, and sensory bin

Preparation: Put 1 ½ cups of chickpeas in each zip bag (use a different zip bag for each color), and add 5-8 squirts of liquid food color. Seal the bag, and shake to mix until the chickpeas are coated. Add liquid food color until you get the desired hue. Repeat for each color. Allow to dry.

Activity: Place the colored chickpeas into a sensory tub. Engage the children in conversation, encouraging them to ask each other questions.

Variation: Invite the children to sort the chickpeas by color. Provide large tweezers and cups, encouraging them to pick up the chickpeas with the tweezers and drop them into cups.

Sensory Activity: Stringing Buttons

Standard: LL 2: Comprehend and use increasingly complex and varied vocabulary

Indicator: Demonstrate understanding of a variety of concepts, such as opposites, positions, and comparisons. (4.1)

Materials: Buttons of various sizes, colors and shapes; thick string or other similar material for stringing (ensure that the string you select will fit through the button holes); for younger children, use buttons with large holes and a large-sized string); and sensory bin

Preparation: Place the buttons into the sensory bin.

Activity: Invite the children to play with the buttons first. Then, provide string for the children to use while they explore. Engage them in conversation as they play. Sample questions: *Can you make a pattern with these buttons? How would you sort them? Can you close your eyes and find a heart shaped button? How did you do that? How are these buttons alike? How are they different? Which button is next*

to the blue button? Which button is under the purple button?

Variation: Provide sorting cards or pattern cards to use with the buttons.

Sensory Activity: Letter Treasure Hunt

Standard: LL 5 Demonstrate understanding of the organization and basic features of print

Indicator: Name at least 26 of the 52 upper-and/or lower-case letters of the alphabet. (4.5)

Materials: Upper and lower case letters of the alphabet, sensory material to cover the letters (e.g., seasonal items such as leaves or flowers), and sensory bin

Preparation: Place the letters on the bottom layer of the tub. Add sensory material to cover the letters such that the children have to “dig” to uncover the letters.

Activity: Invite the children to go on a treasure hunt with you. As they find letters, ask them to identify the letters they discover.

Variation: Vary the number of letters with each child's readiness level. Include letters from each child's name. For children who are able, ask them to identify the sounds each letter makes.

Conclusion

Engaging in well-planned sensory play activities, young children use their senses to learn about the world. Preschool teachers can capitalize on these joyful and highly motivating play experiences to help children build language and literacy skills, positively impacting development in all domains. Recently, the International Literacy Association (ILA, 2018, p. 5) called for early childhood literacy instruction to

> include a content-rich curriculum in which children have opportunities for sustained and in-depth learning including play; different levels of guidance to meet the needs of individual children; a masterful orchestration of activity that supports content learning and social-emotional development; and time, materials, and resources that actively build verbal reasoning skills and conceptual knowledge.

Preschool teachers who model these practices recognize that while play is serious work for children, play brings joy, and when children are joyful, they are more likely to develop a positive disposition toward literacy and learning, paving the path for them to become lifelong learners.

Additional Sensory Play Provocations

And Next Comes L Blog: http://www.andnextcomesl.com/p/sensory-resources.html

Mine for the Making Blog: http://mineforthemaking.com/2011/08/colorful-rice-sensory-bin.html

Run Like Kale Blog: http://runlikekale.com/sensory-play/

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LESIG CONFERENCE SESSION

AT THE ANNUAL ILA CONFERENCE

Using Popular Children's Literature as a Bridge to the Language Experience Approach: Making Reading Personal and Successful for ALL Learners

Sun, Jul 22, 2018: 3:00 PM - 4:00 PM 0897
Special Interest Group (SIG)
Austin Convention Center Room: 13 - Banquet Capacity: 80
Beloved children's author Jerry Pallotta and LESIG president, Stacy Garcia, will share strategies for stretching vocabulary across a topic using children's literature and how this process supports children's vocabulary expansion in creating their own personalized stories through the use of the Language Experience Approach (LEA). LEA is an engaging, personalized, therefore highly supportive, reading approach that highlights the connection of reading and writing. Following Jerry's keynote, additional adaptations of LEA for ELLs and preservice teachers will be shared by LESIG members.

Presenter
Stacy Garcia, Southeastern Louisiana University

Copresenter(s)
Debra Jo Hailey, Southeastern Louisiana University
Dr. Michelle Fazio-Brunson, Northwestern State University
Patricia Alexander, Northwestern State University
Mary Strong, Widener University
Dorothy Idris, School District of Philadelphia
Dr. Leslie Haas, Dallas Independent School District
Jerry Pallotta, Author

Age Levels
General (age 4-18)

Keywords
English Learners
Oral Language

Category
Children's and Young Adult Literature

Intended Audience
Beginning Teachers
Classroom Teachers

Librarians/Media Specialists
Reading Teachers/Specialists/Coaches
Researchers
Special Education Teachers
Teacher Educators
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