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Interaction and language development of ELL students in mainstream classrooms

Beth A. Ralston
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

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INTERACTION AND LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT OF ELL STUDENTS IN
MAINSTREAM CLASSROOMS

by

Beth A. Ralston

Bachelor of Arts
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
2004

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the:

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Steven McCafferty, Committee Chair

John Butcher, Committee Member

LeAnn Putney, Committee Member

Shaoan Zhang, Graduate Faculty Representative

Ronald Smith, Ph. D., Vice President for Research and Graduate Studies
and Dean of the Graduate College

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ABSTRACT

Interaction and Language Development of ELL Students in Mainstream Classrooms

by

Beth Ralston

Dr. Steven McCafferty, Examination Committee Chair
Professor, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, TESOL/Literacy Program
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

English Language Learners make up more than half of the student population in the Clark County School District in Las Vegas, Nevada (“Nevada Report Card”, 2008-09). This is a compelling enough number to motivate teachers, principals, and schools as a whole to reflect on the practices and programs set in place to meet the needs of these students. This study looks specifically at two classrooms in CCSD, observing the teachers’ practices and strategies for effectively meeting the needs of their English Language Learners that are a part of their mainstream classrooms. Pervasive strategies that stood out during the course of the study were interaction in the classroom, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding. The teachers involved differed in their motivation, background, and knowledge in relationship to teaching ELLs. The differences became evident as a result of the observations in their classrooms, as well as their survey responses. This study could serve as a resource for teachers who would like to improve their approaches in meeting the needs of ELLs in their classroom, as well as assist in understanding the background of research based practices that are suggested to be effective when working with students that come from diverse linguistic backgrounds. The information included also illustrates the need to further teachers’ education in relationship to teaching diverse populations.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

Having been a classroom teacher in the same district for the last six years, the most significant challenge that stands out to me is how to effectively meet the needs of English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms. My husband came to this country without knowledge of the English language, and I myself studied abroad to learn another language, so I am familiar with the challenges from the learner's perspective as well. I embarked on researching the topic, trying to identify strategies and methods that have worked for other teachers, schools, and districts. Several studies were found (Bodrova, 2007; Lawrence-Brown, 2004; Mercer, N, 2008) that address and explain the theories behind effective second language teaching, but literature expressing the perspective and experience of teachers, specifying actual practices that could be helpful to teachers that want to improve their instruction was less accessible.

The interest developed to look into the practices of regular classroom teachers and create a research study that is relatable to all classroom teachers, whether one wants to affirm their already good practices, improve what they are doing for second language students based on research based evidence, or even those teachers who have ELL students they simply don't know how to reach. Most important are not even the strategies and approaches that are available to use, but the practicality of actually implementing them in classrooms. With all the challenges and requirements teachers already face, anything new has to be efficient, effective and worthwhile.

Purpose of the Study

According to the U.S. Department of Education (2004), there are 5.5 million limited English proficient students whose first language is other than English in the United States. Over one half of the ELL population (53%) can be found in grades K-4 (Nitsiou, 2006). Having a rapidly growing number of young English Language Learners in a classroom is a great challenge for educators because this statistic increases the chances that the students that are being taught English as a Second Language at this early age in many instances do not have literacy or strong language proficiency in their native language. A lack of proficiency and literacy in a native language can create difficulty for a learner to make connections and develop literacy in the second language. Clark County School District, one of the ten largest school districts in the country, faces the challenge that one in six students are limited English proficient (Crothers, 2008). With the responsibility of providing these and all students with a “meaningful education”, educators are still struggling to find the most effective instructional practices (Collier, 1995). This thesis is designed to explore interactions that occur and are facilitated in mainstream classrooms where a majority of the students are English Language Learners, specifically in Southern Nevada. This research could serve to find out how students in local classrooms interact, and how these interactions are elicited by teachers, within instructional contexts. The research will also consider if and how differentiated instruction and scaffolding impact the learning of English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms. In Title I schools in Southern Nevada, teachers are mandated to use specific tools and resources to guide the curriculum that is required to be taught. The schools in the same area as the school where the data collection took place use Trophies

for reading, Envision Math, and Write From the Beginning as the main core subject curriculum tools. These programs are scripted and designed to align to the standards set forth by the state. This curriculum was developed with native English speakers in mind, thus not intended for children with English language learning needs. Teachers who have English Language learners in their classroom have to specifically plan and decide to supplement these standards based materials to meet the needs of linguistically diverse students.

Interaction in the classroom has been examined by many researchers, such as Van Lier (1996), Bodrova (2007), and Gibbons (2003). It could be valuable to mainstream educators to see firsthand how the curriculum that is expected to be mastered by all students is being implemented with language development in mind. Research suggests that bilingual education is an optimal environment for effective simultaneous language and content development, but most schools, including those in Southern Nevada do not offer such a program. There are several types of bilingual education, including those who use the first language of the learner combined with English instruction to develop language and content proficiency for the learner. These programs are best implemented where there are substantial numbers of students from the same first language background (Crothers, 2008). Other types of bilingual education, such as language immersion have several different models. Some schools that misuse this description to describe English-only “sink or swim” classrooms make it difficult to determine the success rate of language immersion.

The school site used for the study has the common demographic for the area that has adopted the curriculum and programs specific to this region of the district, including Sheltered Instruction for English Language Learners. This Sheltered Instruction is supposed to be a means of instruction that gives additional support to students that are not

proficient in English, (Crothers, 2008) but at the participant school, it was reported that the only component of Sheltered Instruction that was present at the school was a book that each teacher was given to read on their own and implement as they see fit. The classrooms observed at the participant school consisted of students that were of average age, or one year older for their grade. Additionally, more than 90% of the students in each classroom were non-native speakers of English, spread across the language acquisition stages, which are generally known as pre-production, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. How do general education classroom teachers with a majority of English Language Learners teach students with such a variety of linguistic needs in an English only program?

The main focus of this study is interactions in the classroom. The focus was inspired by Van Lier's (1996) book Interaction in the Language Curriculum. The idea of interaction and its benefits is a potential common ground for teachers that are facing the challenge of teaching a large number of English Language Learners in the same environment and under the same circumstances, using the same programs as native English speakers. Later in the literature review, this strategy will be specifically detailed.

Research Questions

My research questions come directly from the research that has detailed effective forms of interaction that should work with English Language Learners theoretically. I would like to see if practical application of these forms is taking place in local classrooms.

My research questions are:

- 1) How are students given the opportunities to interact with their peers to attempt to develop concepts in activities facilitated by the instruction and teacher? What do these opportunities consist of?
- 2) How do mainstream teachers with ELL (English Language Learners) students differentiate their instruction?
- 3) How do teachers of ELL Students scaffold their instruction to allow growth within students' ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)?

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

As mentioned above, there is a wealth of literature behind the theory of acquiring a second language, but the body of literature concerning the practice of these theories continues to grow. Schools and teachers are beginning to attempt to change and adjust to the needs of the students and families they are trying to serve.

Focus of the Study

This study was designed to determine if interaction is occurring in mainstream classrooms, what it looks like, and if it seems to facilitate engagement and participation of English Language Learners. Though many programs have been researched and tested, I chose to look closely at things that regular classroom teachers do to effectively meet the needs of their English Language Learners, as well as continue to instruct the other students in the classroom. Many times teachers want to improve their instruction, but the challenge is working new methods into what they are already trying to accomplish. The following review of literature will first discuss Interaction in the classroom, followed by Differentiated Instruction, then Scaffolding in the classroom setting. It will conclude by discussing the role of the teacher in the learning process for the student and classroom community, with a brief look at programs and strategies that are available and recommended to facilitate an improved level of achievement for English Language Learners.

Interaction

Interaction in the context of education, specifically in a classroom, is a tool students can use to develop as thinkers, problem solvers, and become effective members of a team

(Mercer, 2007). The distinctive role of the spoken language in learning and development is important to point out. Though gestures, diagrams and other non-verbal interactions are also important and used in the classroom, the spoken language students use is directly involved in the route of becoming an educated person. Students need to learn to use the language, as well as interpret the message of the teacher, who uses this spoken language as their main pedagogical tool (Mercer, 2007). Furthermore, in order for this language to be developed and internalized, it is theorized that it must be shared between two or more people before it is appropriated and internalized (Bodrova, 2007).

Psycho-linguistic theorists suggest the importance of interaction for language learners is based on the opportunity to fine tune the language input they are receiving. When language learners are given the opportunity to talk to native speakers in an open way to clarify meaning and ask questions when they don't understand immediately after the input, they are able to adapt the language to their personal needs to remember it and later use it again (Mitchell, 1998).

If looked at from a socio-constructivist perspective, interactions allow the listeners and speakers to go through a process of negotiating meaning (Ko, 2003). In other words, when a speaker is an ELL student, and they say something that is not grammatically correct or easily understood by the listener, the listener then has to request clarification and the speaker and listener both have to evaluate what was said and piece together the message with the newly clarified information. This process allows both parties to think more deeply about the communication and internalize how negotiation occurs so it may be used again in a future interaction.

Social theories of language suggest that whether the student learns language, how well they learn to control it, and for what purposes they will be able to use it are dependent on the social and interactional contexts in which they find themselves

(Gibbons, 2003). In other words, if through interactions in the classroom teachers are finding ways for students to negotiate language in contexts that are relevant to them, they are more likely to use it, understand it, and value it. Language cannot be presented to a student through the role of the content alone, or students will not connect to it enough to remember it and use it on their own. This could be a reason why students who are able to use the target language in the classroom still choose to use their native language in social contexts, for example on the playground. One of the most fundamental features of language is that it varies depending on the context of the situation (Gibbons, 2003). Additionally, the socio-cultural perspective suggests that educational success and failure could be explained by the quality of educational dialogue, rather than based on the individual skills of the teachers and students (Mercer, 2007).

Vygotsky proposed that children's intellectual development is shaped by the acquisition of language, because language makes dialogue possible between children and other members of the community (Mercer, 2007). Vygotsky's idea was that a child's thinking is developed within interactions with others. First, the interaction would be a model for the child, and then later the child would use the same processes in their own thinking (Mercer, 2007).

Other researchers have proposed many reasons why interaction works to effectively promote positive L2 learning outcomes. Some of the reasons suggested are that immediate feedback can occur for the learner, raise the learner's awareness of the form of the target language, as well as create opportunities for the learner to produce the target language and modify their utterances if they are inappropriate or ungrammatical (McDonough, 2008).

Along with ideas presented by the collaboration of researchers, Van Lier (1996) suggests that many of the interactions that occur in traditional classrooms have limited

capacity to induce concrete impactful language development due to their limited nature. He refers to such interactions as an IRF (Initiate, Response, Feedback) exchange. The IRF is a sequence where the teacher initiates by questioning a student, the student responds, and the teacher gives feedback. An example of this exchange could be Teacher: How many people are talking? Student: Two people. Teacher: Yes, that's right, two people (Van Lier, 1996). This discourse began being examined because it appears to be classroom specific, designed only for instruction because it would not occur naturally in a real world conversation. Whereas this typical exchange does allow for the teacher to control the interaction and receive a specific desired response, it is questioned as to whether it is ideal for students to fully develop their communication skills. Van Lier (1996) also highlights possible advantages and disadvantages to this form of interaction in a classroom in the form of Repetition (lowest level), Recitation, Cognition, and Expression. This form of IRF exchange demonstrates teaching language skills specifically and out of a natural context. The main flaws with this format are that the teacher is still the main part of the interaction, and it still gives many of the students an opportunity to "hide" unless it is their turn. Additionally, as mentioned before, it is a relatively unnatural way to use the language (Van Lier, 1996).

Questioning can take on many forms and functions in a classroom, but a teacher should use questioning that encourages children to make their thoughts explicit, share their reasons and knowledge with the class. Teachers should model useful ways of using language that children can appropriate for themselves, in peer group discussions, and in other settings when seeking to obtain information for themselves. Teachers should also provide opportunities for children to make longer contributions so they can express their current state of understanding, articulate ideas, and reveal problems they are encountering with a concept (Mercer, 2007).

Many CCSD schools (including the target school in this research) have begun to research and implement Kagan's cooperative learning strategies to encourage structured interaction, but in a fashion that increases engagement, and therefore increases productivity in the classroom (Kagan, 2002). Since as mentioned above most CCSD classrooms have a large percentage of students still acquiring the English language, it is not practical to interact with them one at a time, but to attempt to engage as many students as possible to use the limited time in the school day more efficiently. Knowing the limitations of the traditional classroom in the context of meeting the needs of a variety of students, teachers need to grow and adjust to teach language and content simultaneously and effectively to narrow the achievement gap. This study suggests ways to begin teaching language and content together is to more effectively facilitate interaction in the classroom, and focus on the assistive components of differentiated instruction and scaffolding within the interactions.

Differentiated Instruction

Differentiated instruction (Lawrence-Brown, 2004) is an important component to ensuring that all students, including English Language Learners of all levels, are able to meaningfully participate in lessons that would otherwise be too difficult for them. Differentiated instruction recognizes that individual students are diverse in their knowledge that they already possess, as well as their needs to learn the curriculum that is being taught. Instead of being treated as a group of students, students are nourished as individual learners (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Differentiated Instruction has commonly been defined as the effort of teachers to create different levels of expectations for task completion within a lesson or unit. The true benefit is that differentiated instruction accommodates expectations for struggling students to help them improve, and supports

exceptional children in an effort to challenge them. In thinking of English Language Learners, educators must be careful not to confuse simple mainstreaming into an English only classroom as an appropriate increase of expectations. Heterogeneous classrooms can be a benefit to students learning a second language because it allows all students to be in a classroom with peers that can be models for learning grade level content knowledge and the target language. According to the Supreme Court's 1974 ruling in *Lau vs. Nichols*, it is not legal to place a child in a mainstream English class before he or she can participate meaningfully. Not providing the same educational opportunities to language minority students as to native English speakers is a violation of the language minority children's civil rights as protected under Title Six of the Civil Rights act of 1964 (Crothers, 2008). There is a misconception that there needs to be bilingual or pull out programs to meet the needs of these students, but it is also important not to misrepresent a program or facility that is saying it is meeting the needs of these students, that is not.

Differentiated Instruction is one method that can help first create awareness of the needs of each individual student, and then provide the adapted curricula to meet those needs. Effective differentiated instruction simply starts with high-quality general education lessons (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). It is important to keep in mind that students who are not proficient in English are intellectually capable, but without additional supports, they will most likely fail (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). In addition to the teacher's thoughtful instruction indicated by the attributes mentioned above, the teacher can provide support through technology, manipulatives, visual aids, charts, outlines, picture cues, and audio tapes (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Personal assistance, which I will later explain as scaffolding, is an important method of this additional support, both through peers and adult guidance. It is important that the teachers monitor this support closely to

avoid unnecessary dependencies on the part of the learners.

The final component that defines differentiated instruction is purposeful structuring of the instructional day (Lawrence-Brown, 2004). Structure allows students to understand what to expect, and it helps to make tasks more manageable for students with limited language skills. Instead of focusing on how to perform the task, the students are able to focus on the content being studied in the task itself. For example, if a teacher provides English Language Learners with a structured environment that is routine and predictable, he/she no longer has to try to figure out what the procedures and expectations are, but can follow through with the activity with their mind focused on the language and content tasks instead of trying to figure out what they are supposed to be doing (Lawrence-Brown, 2004).

Scaffolding/ZPD

A student's Zone of Proximal Development is the area between the capability of problem solving or achievement the student demonstrates at a moment and the point a teacher wants the student to reach next with the assistance of a person knowledgeable in the desired content (Vygostsky, 1978). What a child does with some assistance today is what the child will do independently tomorrow (Bodrova, 2007). Every child's ZPD differs from another, as well as from one instance to another, depending on the skill, background knowledge, and proficiency in that subject area. The dynamics of a child's ZPD depends upon the social interactions that help them reach the next level of independence, therefore a child's level of assisted performance includes any situation in which there are improvements in the child's mental activities as a result of social interaction (Bodrova, 2007). When a teacher takes a student's ZPD into consideration, she decides on tasks that are appropriate for the student's ability level, but should also

consider the cognitive demands of the task to avoid oversimplifying for English Language Learners. Cognitively demanding tasks are appropriately challenging assignments that require students to think before responding, which avoids the issue of students finishing assignments too quickly without effort or expressing frustration with the difficulty of the task (Mohan, 2008)

Scaffolding helps a learner accomplish a task they would not have been able to do on their own. It is a special type of assistance that is intended to help the learner reach that level of achievement on their own in a later situation (Mercer, 2007) Scaffolding is an approach that provides teachers an effective means to integrate ELL instruction into content-area instruction and to enable ELLs to demonstrate their knowledge without complete reliance on language (Pawan, 2008).

Scaffolding involves both identifying the individual needs of the learners and providing supporting instruction in order to help students reach higher levels of learning and competency (Mohan, 2008.) It is important for teachers to be aware of when their expectations of the learner are appropriate and when they need to be adjusted to meet the learner's needs and abilities, but effective teachers communicate individually appropriate high expectations and support their students in meeting those expectations (Mohan, 2008). The teacher does not have to be giving the direct interaction, nor the scaffolding, but it is important for the party giving the support to be capable of conveying the information and collaborating with the less capable learner (Van Lier, 1996). There are various types of scaffolding functions that can help clarify the method for teachers wishing to implement it more effectively or purposefully in their classroom: getting the learner's interest, simplifying the task, highlighting the task's relevant features, maintaining motivation, controlling the learner's frustration, and modeling (Ko, 2003). These functions are important because besides the content area knowledge, if one of the

goals of the scaffolding is for the learner to improve language proficiency, the knowledge has to be developed in a manner and through a task that is valuable to them. An important goal of effective teachers is for their students to become more independent and active thinkers. Academic self- regulation occurs when students set goals for their learning, and engage in planning, monitoring, and controlling their progress (Mohan, 2008).

Some of the varieties of scaffolding include cultural scaffolding, social scaffolding, linguistic scaffolding, and the most familiar to a teacher would be conceptual scaffolding (Pawan, 2008). Cultural scaffolding involves the teacher developing a relationship with her students, getting to know the particularities of their experiences, knowledge and cultural heritage and teaching them how to use that background knowledge to successfully navigate an American classroom (Pawan, 2008). Social scaffolding is when teachers mediate student centered activities and assist them in learning how to successfully engage in cooperative learning, and any other activity that involves social skills in the academic setting. Linguistic scaffolding is when teachers assist students in learning how to use and negotiate language to carry out a task or interact on a specific topic. Often with linguistic scaffolding teachers use literacy in other content areas to demonstrate how language is used across the curriculum and to help students make meaning out of text in many subject areas. Conceptual scaffolding is when the teacher assists the students in understanding the specialized concepts that are being taught (Pawan, 2008). The specific strategies of scaffolding as mentioned above would fit in this area.

Another wonderful benefit to the idea of all these practices, differentiation, scaffolding and interaction, is that all students benefit from the practice, not just the L2 learners.

With the staggering number of students who have such a variety of needs, and the reduced number of funds and resources available to do so, schools can no longer take the out of putting these students' needs to the side. Many teachers believe that students who do not speak English should be put in a special class to learn English first, and then return to the classroom "ready" to learn the content information. Most schools ELLs attend are immersion schools, meaning they are not provided instruction simply on how to develop the language; they have to do so in the same classroom as the native speakers with the same instruction.

Teachers cannot focus only on the language needs of ELL students in mainstream classrooms, but must do so while developing content knowledge. English Language Learners are being required to meet the same standards as students who enter the school environment without the same challenges. Pullout programs have been the predominant means to try to accommodate the needs of English language learners, but this isolates the language learners, and is suggested to actually decrease their exposure and limit their access to the academic content (Callahan, 2004). Teachers and schools need to focus on strategies that work for all these students in order to give them a chance to compete with their peers. In an English only school, ELL students are not only learning English as a subject, but are learning through it as well. In these content based classrooms, the construction of curriculum knowledge needs to progress hand in hand with the development of the English language (Gibbons, 2003).

Teacher Role/Effectiveness

As mentioned above, it is imperative that the classroom teachers who are planning and carrying out instruction are purposeful and thoughtful about what methods and strategies to use to better meet the needs of all the students in the classroom, taking into

account the background knowledge, the dynamic of the group of students as a whole, as well as individual strengths and weaknesses. Each of the ideas outlined above start here. After the planning of the instruction, the teacher then has the responsibility of creating a positive and engaging environment to facilitate the desired outcomes. This engagement is often monitored by outside sources, sometimes administration or other peers, and is judged by what the students are doing when observed in a classroom. It is important to consider that though teachers want the students to be active in engaging activities, it is the teacher that facilitates the engagement. It is often found that exemplary teaching is a balancing of skills instruction within the context of reading and writing and exemplary teachers go to great lengths to encourage student academic self regulation and motivation (Mohan, 2008). What is often found in less successful classrooms is that students are often participating in compliance activities where they are working to either please their teachers, parents, or to simply receive a good grade (Mohan, 2008).

Another great way to maximize class time is to impart the assistance of other professionals and adult volunteers effectively (Mohan, 2008). Too often teachers feel that they must bear the burden of all classroom responsibilities independently, but there are many who know who their resources are and use them in their classrooms. When considering second language students, parents who are bilingual are an excellent asset to bridge the communication gap a monolingual teacher may have with some students in the classroom.

Classroom climate is an important element for a teacher to consider, especially when the students potentially come from various backgrounds, countries, and school experiences. Most effective teachers reportedly include all students in all activities and have similar expectations for all (Mohan, 2008). One of the key components in placing those expectations on students is that they are supported by the teacher in reaching those

expectations. These teachers report that classroom life for weaker students differs little from that of the on track students with the exception of more intensive one-on-one instruction and intervention. This has also be said to decrease the disparity between the weakest and strongest students in the classroom (Mohan, 2008). From a practical standpoint this is imperative. Students who are able to improve on their weaknesses and gain lifelong strategies to negotiate language and information will continue the upward climb to achievement. Teachers need to help students become independent and active thinkers. One challenge that is ongoing in CCSD is that students are demonstrating achievement in early education, on average up through third grade, then steadily declining after that. If collaboration occurs from teacher to teacher, grade-to-grade, school to school, then students can continue to receive instruction based on interaction that will maintain and increase their achievement.

Another perspective of a teacher's role in improving an English Language Learner's achievement is supporting them to increase their confidence in themselves to give them the power and courage to try when it seems the tasks may be overwhelming. Many ELL's, especially newcomers, feel a sense of failure and confusion. Some of them were considered academically successful in their native countries and feel frustration in the sudden feeling of failure. On the other hand, most second language students have been within the CCSD system their whole lives, but with the combination of an non-English language at home and the challenge of English only at school with the absence of education in their native language, they struggle to make the necessary connections to the new curriculum (Crothers,2008). Students who perceive they are in control of their achievement seem to engage more in school, especially as they get older. This perceived self- control and interest in school are more likely to increase when students perceive their teachers as warm and supportive (Pressley, 2008). One of the easiest ways to create

this environment for students is to simply make sure that the tasks teachers give these students are well supported and relevant to them. A teacher can allow students the freedom to collaborate with their peers, especially discussion that allows them to discover an answer together and come to a consensus in understanding to help increase their self esteem and confidence (Mercer, 2007). As mentioned above, this needs to occur in a structured way to ensure that the discussion is focused and all students are participating as equally as possible.

The biggest challenge in making all of this possible is teacher training and preparation. With regard to professional development, 6 of 10 teachers who work with English Language Learners reported they had received in-service training specifically related to the teaching of these students in the past five years; overall, they had received a median of 4 hours of such training (August, 2008). There is an immense pressure with No Child Left Behind and the testing regulations to have students achieve grade level standards. Teachers, however, need to start from where the students are, use what they already know, and help them to go back and forth across the bridge between everyday and educated ways of thinking. Teachers should attempt to use all of these above mentioned strategies, specifically in elementary schools, through whole class instruction, small groups, pairs and individuals. Through these structures, teachers can attempt to keep all the students within the collective learning enterprise of classroom discourse (Mercer, 2007).

CHAPTER 3
METHODOLOGY
Setting/Participants

This study was conducted at a Title 1 elementary school in Las Vegas, Nevada. The school, on average, has an enrollment of approximately 1,000 students from Pre-Kindergarten to fifth grade. The school has a diverse population that is similar to many other Title 1 schools in the area. In the 2008-09 accountability report, the school's demographics were as follows: Hispanic/Latino: 70.2%, Limited English Proficient: 52.5%, African American: 12.5%, Caucasian: 11.6%, Asian/Pacific Islander: 5.5%, Free/Reduced Lunch: 72.3%.

The student population at the school is considered transient, as is the student population within the district as a whole. It is common for the students to have attended several different schools before completing the elementary level of their education. According to the 2008-2009 accountability report for the school, there was a 41.9% transiency rate that year.

The Title 1 Schools are required to employ teachers who are documented as being highly qualified instructors, indicating that they are certified to teach students who are considered to be at risk, which includes impoverished students and students that come from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

At the research site, no programs are specifically designed to meet the needs of English Language Learners. Instead, they are mainstreamed in their age appropriate grade level upon enrollment with the expectation that the assigned teacher will provide Sheltered Instruction to support their developing skills and linguistic needs.

Class 1

At the above mentioned school, the first group of participants were students in the morning session of the Pre-Kindergarten class. The Pre-Kindergarten program is funded through Title I, and created specifically for students who need exposure to a structured learning environment and basic skills prior to entering Kindergarten. To be selected for the program, the students are administered an exam prior to their admittance. They are selected based upon their need for basic skill development, such as counting, shape and color identification, among other notable early childhood skills that build background knowledge. Of the 15 students, 14 were considered Limited English Proficient (LEP). The 14 students who were determined to be LEP came from mono-lingual Spanish speaking families with little to no prior exposure to school or the English language. This determination on LEP coding was officially based on the teacher's report of their English Oral Language proficiency level, derived from their scores on the LAS assessment, which is administered to any student enrolled at school whose family has documented consistent exposure to any language other than English. The test is administered the first year of enrollment, and each subsequent year until the student demonstrates adequate English proficiency for two consecutive years. For many of the students in class 1, this was their first exposure to both formal schooling and the English language. Since the class in general met the specification of desired research subjects by the student researcher, they were all included in the study with the formal written consent of their guardians.

Teacher 1 reported having seven years of teaching experience, including four years as a Kindergarten teacher and three years teaching Pre-Kindergarten, which was her current placement. All of her teaching experience was at the research site. She earned an undergraduate degree in education and continued on to earn a Masters in Early

Childhood Education.

In an open ended survey, she explained that she became a teacher because she feels she is naturally good with children and sincerely enjoys being around them. Though she stated that she does not have personal experience as an English Language Learner, her husband does and she thoughtfully considers the needs of ELL's in her classroom, which will be further explained and detailed later in the Discussion section.

Class 2

The second group of student participants were fourth-graders at the same school. The class consisted of 32 students, and all students had formal consents signed by their guardians. The class was a mixture of students who were native English speakers, as well as students who were at different levels of English language acquisition. During the observations, if it became difficult to determine how the students were responding to the instruction, the focus of the observation would turn to Student A, a boy from Spain, and Student B, a girl from Bulgaria. Both of these students had been in the United States for less than one school year and were determined to be non-English speakers according to their LAS scores. They were used as a baseline because as far as language learners were concerned for this particular classroom, they would have presumably had the most need for specialized instruction. For scheduling purposes, most of the observations took place in the afternoon where there were also inclusion students from a self contained behavior class, which at times brought the total number of students present to 37.

Teacher 2 reported having twelve years of teaching experience, one year in Kindergarten, three years in second grade, and eight years in fourth grade, her current teaching assignment. She earned an undergraduate degree in education and a master's degree in educational leadership. Like Teacher 1, she completed an open ended survey. She explained she became a teacher to "make a difference" and that she does not have

any personal experience as an ELL, nor does any of her immediate family.

Data Sources and Collection

On April 24, 2008, prior to the beginning of the study, approval to conduct the research was granted by UNLV's office for the Protection of Human Subjects. A subsequent approval to perform the research within a Clark County School District school was obtained on December 5, 2008. Three main sources of data were collected during the research process. The first source of information was observation and field notes. The goal of this study was to gain information about what was already occurring in the participant classrooms, so observation became the most useful tool, as it gave the most information about what was naturally occurring. I observed in each classroom for approximately 12-15 hours. All observations took place while the classes were conducted under normal conditions, without any prior planning or modifications for the observations. The teachers were not interrupted by the researcher, nor did the researcher interact with any of the students.

In order to be less distracting to the teacher and students since I was most interested in their natural interactions, I did not videotape the observations, but did take detailed field notes regarding the events, conversations and environment that I observed. The second set of data was obtained during informal interviews, or member checks, with each teacher participant following the observations to clarify the researcher's understanding of procedures, events, and teacher actions and practices as needed to improve the quality and accuracy of the field notes. Each interview was conducted privately with the researcher at the teacher's convenience and lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. Most interviews were conducted directly following the first four observations, but continued on an as needed basis. All interviews took place in the teacher's classrooms when students

and parents were not present. All participant responses were recorded in writing, and later analyzed as a part of the observation field notes.

The final source of data was open ended surveys. The questions were centered around each teacher participant's background and their individual teaching philosophies. A copy of the survey questions and a record of the responses are provided in the Appendix (A,B).

Participant responses and observations were all transcribed in the written form at the time of the data collection. The participants did not consent to be recorded in any fashion, therefore no devices were used to do so.

Data Analysis

To analyze the data, I created a checklist based of themes that were common throughout the observation data (see Appendix C). The checklist was organized to code specific interactions into differentiated instruction or scaffolding based on examples found in the research review. I went through the field notes using the checklist as a guideline and highlighted areas in corresponding colors where the specific interactions were noted. I used the checklist and highlighted notes to organize the data in relationship to the main categories the research was based upon: Interaction, Differentiated Instruction, and Scaffolding. I used the checklist for coding, as well as to see if the themes were consistent in each class and between the two participant classes.

The participating teacher surveys and field notes from the interviews were analyzed for connections to the observations to clarify choices, draw conclusions, and triangulate the data about the teacher practices that were observed.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This study was initiated to explore interaction in today's classrooms. Each research question focuses on a specific type of interaction that could be observed in the classroom setting. Then, the interactions noted will be analyzed to see if they are quality enough to productively support a student in improving their language in their own Zone of Proximal Development. "What a child is able to do in collaboration today he will be able to do independently tomorrow" (Vygotsky, 1987). Since each child's ZPD is different from each other, as well as from skill to skill for each individual, teachers need to be aware of this fact as they develop their tasks and structure their assistance to meet the needs of individual students. For this reason, a brief description of each activity as well as the interaction itself will be used to show the teacher's intentions, awareness and what she does with it.

This research was organized to look at the interactions observed in local classrooms from a practitioner standpoint in order to be helpful to teachers who would like to potentially improve their instruction of English Language Learners in their mainstream classrooms. In this section, each research question will be restated and data that corresponds with each topic will be reported and supported with examples from each participant's class. Following each class depiction, there will be a comparison of the two classes based on the observations and other data collected.

Question 1: Interaction

The first research question is: How are students given the opportunities to interact with their peers to attempt to develop concepts in activities facilitated by the instruction of the teacher? What do these opportunities consist of? During the course of the research and based on the information discovered in the literature review, it was also determined that the opportunity for students to meaningfully interact directly with the teacher was noteworthy as well, so those instances will be included in the findings. Interaction with peers and with the teacher incite different learning experiences. When children interact with each other, even if one (or both) children are factually or grammatically incorrect, Mercer (2007) explains that the opportunity to discuss, conflict, and resolve differences brings the learning to a higher level. When children are exposed to the viewpoint of an adult, they are unlikely to take issue with it, Mercer (2007) further explains, so a different type of learning negotiation occurs for the child.

Class 1

The allowance and facilitation of teacher-student and student-student interaction was a pervasive aspect of Teacher 1's practice during the observations. The students had a structured routine from the moment they entered the door through the time they were dismissed. This type of environment that has a consistent routine as Lawrence-Brown (2004) states, allows students to focus their attention on the content and language they are trying to learn instead of trying to figure out how to complete the task. This structure in Class 1 began with a required interaction with the teacher, and continued as a process throughout the instruction. During this time, opportunities were ongoing for the students to be exposed to, use, and experiment with the language.

Whenever possible, Teacher 1 encouraged the students to use each other as resources for learning, including the use of their L1 (Spanish in this instance) when needed. Much

of the time the interaction opportunities were structured with expectations and were almost always based on academic content. The students were clearly functioning based on modeled behavior by the teacher, as they were using their interaction for learning and connecting it to content even when not being directly facilitated or structured by the teacher. Class 1 had a consistent and purposeful structure of each lesson and the school day as a whole. After just two observations, it was obvious that each day's procedures mirrored the day before in a way that allowed all students to function independently regardless of their linguistic abilities. This conclusion was drawn based upon the fact that all students were able to meaningfully participate all the time, and if they were not able to, they helped each other to be able to do so. No instances were noted where a student was not actively engaged in a lesson, assignment or activity without immediate feedback or redirection from a peer, parent helper, or the teacher.

Teacher 1 purposefully facilitated interactions with and between students using modeling, examples, gestures, and teachable moments to extend what the students were doing and potentially improve what they could do the next time they had the opportunity to interact in a similar way, structuring possibilities for learning in a manner consistent with what Lawrence-Brown (2004) suggests is imperative by a classroom teacher to prevent future failure of second language students.

Class 1, Example 1(Interaction):

Each day began with the reinforcement of a letter and sound. Each student was given some sort of replica of the letter, sometimes a stamp on the hand, other times a magnet or paper cut out of the letter. The students would be expected to state the letter and sound to enter the room, and if they were not able to, another student would support them. When one student was unable to do so, Teacher 1 stated "Jesus, she needs help." Jesus told the student the letter name and sound, and the child repeated it and was able to enter the

room. Teacher 1 identified a student that needed support to complete a necessary task, and called upon another student to scaffold her, placing the learning potential and responsibility on both students. Additionally, the struggling student received immediate feedback related to her ZPD. She was unable to remember the letter and sound independently, and cues and hints did not help. The peer gave her the answer and the student repeated it, allowing her to potentially gain the knowledge. The teacher now knew that the hints and cues that were working for the other students did not work with her, so she needed to do something different to support her. A more capable speaker of the language supported her and enabled her to clarify meaning and hear a proper example of how the exchange was supposed to sound. Specific modeling and immediate feedback assists students in adapting the language to their personal needs in order to potentially use it later, a practice suggested by Mitchell (1998).

Class 1, Example 2 (Interaction):

Upon entering the classroom, the students eat lunch before the instruction begins. One student referred to the letter stamped on her hand and said “Yo tengo J”. The other students also pointed to their stamp. Some said “me too”, and others “yo tambien”. When teacher 1 noted this interaction, she moved to the table where those students were sitting and asked them if they could think of something that started with the letter J. The students started looking around the room and telling each other things that started with J, some examples they said were “jelly, jumping, jokes, and junk.” The kids then began to laugh and try to make these words into a silly song. Other students heard them and joined in. Teacher 1 saw an opportunity to embrace a teachable moment and add to what the students were able to do independently. She assisted them in using verbal interaction to extend their thinking and build their knowledge of how they could use a letter to do what Mohan (2008) considers important, to become more independent and active

thinkers. Additionally, Bodrova (2007) explained that it was favorable for more than one student to participate in the learning at the same time, because in order for a language to be developed and internalized, it is ideal for two or more people to share interactions to make this possible.

Class 1, Example 3 (Interaction):

Teacher 1 was attentive to the students and took many opportunities to interact with them and to support their ability to communicate verbally. One student, Lizbeth, needed something from the teacher but did not know how to say it in English, so she tried to use hand motions to indicate what she needed. The teacher verbally encouraged her to try and Lizbeth said, “I drank me milk” and Teacher 1 responded, “I see you finished your milk and your sandwich.” This student clearly wanted to use the English language to communicate her ideas, but lacked the vocabulary to do so. McDonough (2008) suggested that creating opportunities for students to produce the target language, even when they are unsure, is important because then the teacher has the opportunity to modify their utterances if necessary in a structured, safe environment. Teacher 1 gave sufficient think time to allow the student to communicate what she did know how to say, as well as allowed her to use gestures to support what she was trying to say since she was in the preproduction stage of the language. She then gave feedback and specifically told her the correct way to communicate what she wanted to say in an effort to scaffold her in her ZPD. Using gestures and other non-verbal interactions is directly involved with developing language to perform as an educated person. Students also begin to use spoken language with the teacher, which Mercer (2007) indicates is valuable since the teacher generally uses language as their primary pedagogical tool, so they know that student is ready to use the language as a tool for learning.

Class1, Example 4 (Interaction):

After lunch, the class continued with direct instruction in literacy. Teacher 1 modeled the interactions and thought processes she wanted the students to use later in their center activities that supported her direct instruction. Ko (2003) suggests that the modeling by the teacher of expected interactions that are later practiced during center activities allows students to process the information for themselves and think more deeply about the communication. Teacher 1 read aloud a story in a Big Book that allowed all students to see the pictures and words simultaneously. The book focused on the theme of the week and was also the same story that was used in the listening center. Teacher 1 read the story aloud, using hand motions to model position words, and did think alouds to show students how to start thinking about what the book is saying to comprehend. "I see the mama's getting far away." During the reading students repeated new vocabulary or read along with repetitive words they recognized. The students also began to verbally make predictions as the story progressed, "I think she is going to try to stay close to her mama."

Gibbons (2003) suggested the practice of allowing students the opportunity to make verbal utterances at will permits the students the freedom to use the language when they feel it will be helpful and meaningful to them, and gives the teacher information as to what strategies they are picking up from her and what vocabulary they are becoming familiar with. Allowing them to use the vocabulary and strategies consistently encourages them to do so when they are working independently as well. During both the direct instruction and the center activities, students were given many opportunities to negotiate meaning within their conversations and in relationship to their reading and other activities.

Mercer (2007) mentioned the importance of using interaction as a tool to develop as thinkers, problem solvers, and effective members of a team. Teacher 1 rarely answered

any questions directly or specifically redirected any incorrect response with the correct answer, but asked the students questions to lead them to an acceptable answer, unless the student was unable to use these cues effectively, then she appropriately modified her approach so they could understand and demonstrate their understanding based on their own abilities and ZPD. She also gave the students the power and responsibility to use each other as a resource instead of relying on her.

In one center, the students were supposed to draw a picture to respond to the story they re-listened to at a listening center. One student asked Teacher 1 what the directions were and she asked another student to explain to him what to do. The student said, “Draw tu picture” and the other responded “Oh ya! Ok, I draw one”. As many of the center activities, they were familiar activities that included different content than the previous week. The student just needed a reminder of what the directions were with some support of his native language. Following this interaction, the student was able to proceed independently. Unlike many young children in a classroom, he did not hesitate to verbalize his need for support. Modeling was a prevalent occurrence by both the teacher and students for each other. This supports the thinking that children’s thought processes develop from interactions with others. The interactions first should be modeled by the teacher, and the students will then use the same processes in their own thinking. Mercer (2007) suggests that when students copy the modeling of the teacher when working together that they are internalizing the strategies for interacting.

Class 2

Class 2 had a different structure, being an intermediate class that lasted the entire school day. Opportunities for interaction occurred in this classroom as well, but they were more limited, less structured and less frequent. In addition, more interactions occurred between students than teacher to student. With the activities going on

in the classroom, the teacher facilitated productive interaction with and between students, but capitalization of those opportunities by the teacher was not observed. In fact, the teacher was rarely observed speaking to the students at all, following the actual direct instruction of the lesson. It could be argued that some of the interactions noted during the observations in Class 2 could be better classified as conversations, since only a few instances of interactions between the students actually led to greater understanding for the participants, or evidence of negotiated meaning that led to future use or assistance in completing a task.

Class 2, Example 1 (Interaction):

During one observation, the students were discussing assessment results they were adding to their data binders, or personal portfolios. They were comparing their reports and reflecting on their performances. The students seemed to know how to read and evaluate the reports because they did so independently, but during the time of the observation, the teacher did not interact with any of the students nor discuss their progress with them. She was working at her desk alone. However, some of the students did interact with each other, stating things such as “I got a 2.5 that sucks!” and “Eso es para STAR reading”. The use of the first language suggests that the teacher didn’t mind it being a part of the classroom environment, but it was not clear if she encouraged it for the improvement of student understanding. Additionally, besides direct statements, no additional support or acknowledgement of the need of additional support was noted for the student who still needed to communicate in his first language in the classroom. This observation was categorized as interaction because according to Ko (2003), if the students are clarifying the task for each other, and negotiating meaning of the communication or content, the exchange can technically be defined as an interaction. Following the brief exchanges, however, the students did not continue their interaction or

facilitate further interactions on the same topic, so it is unclear if they gained knowledge from this experience. Where this activity could have been used to teach students how to use interaction, Mohan (2007) explained that in less successful classrooms students may appear to be participating in compliance activities to either please their teacher, parents or to receive good grades rather than interacting to enhance their language and content knowledge.

Class 2, Example 2 (Interaction):

In another observation, Teacher 2 was using questioning strategies to discuss an article the class was reading about Antarctica. She seemed to be staying close to the IRF exchange that Van Lier (1996) mentioned and suggested may not be the most effective way of facilitating questions and higher level thinking in a classroom. She would ask questions such as “What animals might you find in Antarctica?” and the students would answer “penguin” or “polar bear” based on information that was directly in the passage in front of them. The exchange did not require them to explain their ideas, support their answers, or do any inferring. Van Lier (1996) explained that this type of interaction has been examined by researchers for its effectiveness because it appears to be classroom specific, which makes it difficult for students to imitate and reuse in real life situations.

In addition to the limited questioning strategies by the teacher, the students did not pose any questions themselves, indicating that this interaction may be typical in the classroom and that expansion beyond the stated activity may not be a common occurrence. If teachers provide students with opportunities to make longer verbal contributions, the teacher has a greater awareness of the students’ understanding, and problems they are having with a concept, which Mercer (2007) considers an ideal classroom practice.

Class 2, Example 3 (Interaction):

On another day, cooperative learning was being utilized to facilitate interaction in the content area of social studies. The students were instructed to choose a partner from a specified group (which ended up pairing more capable students with a struggling partner). The students quickly paired up to complete a geography worksheet provided by Teacher 2. The students sat in pairs, but most of the observation included students doing self talk to work their way through the first few questions, which were relatively easy in skill for the fourth grade, instead of interacting with their partner. The student from Bulgaria who was a non-English speaker according to her LAS scores, copied her answers directly from her partner's paper. She did not attempt to read any of the questions, nor did she or her partner ever speak to each other or exchange any non-verbal communication. During this time, the teacher was working on something at her desk, no interaction between the teacher and students was noted. Later on in the activity, as the difficulty of the task increased, the students began to look to their partners for support. The partners that had a large disparity of ability between them struggled to support each other because the less able student was not able to properly communicate or work out solutions to scaffold their partner. Conversely, the more able student tended to do the work themselves and give the answers to their partner instead of discuss or scaffold them to help them be more capable to reach the answer themselves. The students that were a closer match based on ability negotiated meaning of their activity and justified their thinking to each other. When trying to use the scale on a map to answer a question, one partner said "What is the estimate of the distance? I think it is 100 miles." The other student said, "I think that's way too short, and I think 500 miles is too big." Her partner responded, "Ok let's put 300 or 400 miles then." They did use communication to make the task easier, but it was not evident whether or not they came

to an accurate conclusion on how to complete the task or if either one would be able to complete the same type of activity independently if they were faced with it again.

Comparison of Class 1 and 2 (Interaction)

When looking at the examples of the interaction observed in Class 1 in comparison to Class 2, specific differences were apparent. In Class 1, the teacher made specified, thought-out plans to incorporate structured interaction into her classroom environment. Additionally, the teacher from Class 1 specifically targeted students in their ZPD to guide her questioning and planned activities. The teacher from Class 1 personally interacted with each student and her questions were structured to provoke thoughtful answers and to incite further questions by the students, whereas the teacher from Class 2 was rarely observed interacting with the students in any way, and her questioning was not designed to elicit more than the typical “correct” response.

The questioning styles of both teachers were different as well. Teacher 1 provided immediate and productive feedback, and required the students to re-evaluate and restate their answers when appropriate. The students even expected each other to explain their thinking when in a peer interaction, suggesting that the teacher modeled this behavior on a frequent basis. The questioning in Class 2 was closely related to the IRF, as mentioned above, which suggests that the teacher would ask a question with a desired result in mind, accept and or reject the answer. There was little expectation of expansion of thought, or justification of answers which would make it difficult to move a student through their ZPD in that area. Feedback from Teacher 2 was limited to “good”, “does anyone have a better answer”, and “Ok.” Peer interactions did not illicit feedback between the partners, nor from the teacher.

Question 2: Differentiated Instruction

The second research question asked how mainstream teachers with ELL students differentiate their instruction. While in the process of coding the themes consistent in the observations, the following activities were considered within the theme of differentiated instruction: use of realia, cooperative learning, consideration of student interests and experiences, consideration of various learning styles and abilities, use of technology, use of manipulatives, visual aids, picture supports, audio supports, as well as purposeful structuring of the school day and instructional time. According to Lawrence- Brown (2004), use of differentiated instruction is the first step in integrating the English Language Learners into the mainstream classroom and maintaining high expectations for them without taking away the integrity of a quality, meaningful education. Second language students cannot be expected to perform the same tasks with the same ability as a native English speaker, but they also don't need tasks that require less cognitive ability, just a modified expectation of the use of language to explain their answers, perhaps an alternative method of response combined with one or more of the strategies and resources listed above to support the communication of the information to the student.

Class 1

In Class 1, students were provided some aspect of differentiated instruction with every lesson. Teacher 1 is notably aware of her students' needs and how the various of differentiated instruction can help those needs be met. This awareness was made evident by her response to how she used differentiated instruction in her classroom, as asked in the teacher survey. "I try to reach all students through as many types of instruction as possible, visual, auditory, tactile, etc. When I present a new concept, say vocabulary, I might show picture examples, we might sing about it for a week, write about it, translate it into Spanish (since that is what most of my children speak at home),

they might see the same concept at all of their centers. Also, I pull small groups daily...it might be that each of my groups is doing something different each day if that's what each of them needs...". Effective differentiated instruction starts with what Lawrence-Brown (2004) considers high-quality general education lessons, which stems from a teacher's individual training and awareness of her students.

Class 1, Example 1 (Differentiated Instruction):

During direct instruction, Teacher 1 used either visual or kinesthetic supports for all verbal commands and instruction. For example, students were beginning to learn a new letter of the alphabet. Teacher 1 expected them to identify the letter by name and its corresponding sound. First she gave them each a card with the letter on it and a picture that began with the letter sound she wanted them to produce. She instructed them to show their letter to a friend and tell them the name and the sound the letter makes. As she monitored this, one student continued to articulate the sound incorrectly. She stopped and modeled for everyone how to position their teeth and tongue to be sure they were all producing the sound correctly, she said, "watch my mouth while I make the sound, then you do it." She then instructed the students to check their friends' mouths for the correct form when saying the sound. Mohan (2008) sees this monitoring and immediate feedback as an opportunity for students to be confident that they were completing the task correctly, without bringing shame or hesitation because of the risk of making a mistake.

Class 1, Example 2 (Differentiated Instruction):

In addition to the modes the teacher herself mentioned in her survey, Teacher 1 was observed using many gestures, signs and other non-verbal cues to support verbal commands and instruction. For example, if she wanted the student to put something away and they didn't know what she meant, she would physically model how to put it away, then have the student repeat. Additionally, for all new vocabulary, she would show

what the word meant with her body (such as if she said “think” she would touch her brain at the same time) and the students would usually do the same when they used the word at a future time. She had pictures or written words to correlate to each song and read aloud for the students to see to connect the modalities of their thinking. The weeks were themed with one topic and every activity was somehow related to the theme so the students were aware of what they needed to focus on at any given time. Teacher 1 integrated technology so the students had another form of input of the same information with visual support, which was in a format that was also entertaining to maintain the students’ interest. Any time the teacher presented one of these visual supports, she explained why it was helpful and how the students could use a similar support when they were working on their learning with a cooperative group or on their own.

Class 1, Example 3 (Differentiated Instruction):

Teacher 1 demonstrated methods of developing trusting relationships with her students, offering consistent and clear routines, incorporated Spanish materials and support when possible, modeled positive interactions and created a social context that provided ongoing opportunities for English language development using various styles. During one observed lesson, Teacher 1 was teaching students how to utilize positional words correctly in a whole group setting. After reviewing the positional words using direct instruction, she maintained the learner interested during the guided practice by playing “Simon Says”. She gave immediate feedback, and a lot of modeling, as this seemed to be a difficult concept for the students. “Good job! Your shoe is over the bear! Please help Esteven.” Many of the students were looking at another and copying each other if they did not know what to do. Teacher 1, “Now put your bear in your hand. How do you say ‘in’ in Spanish?” One of the students responded, “a dentro.” The students proceeded to follow the cues. She also used various vocabulary in English to

support the new vocabulary. “Put your bear between your feet.” Some of the students said, “Where? Here?” Teacher 1 responded, “Yes, between is in the middle!” One of the students complained that another wasn’t doing anything and the teacher responded, “Then you may want to remind him what he needs to do.” This classroom environment seemed very safe, and all the students seemed to want the teacher’s approval, as well as each other’s. Teacher 1 paid attention to the students’ diverse knowledge, including using gestures and their native language to allow every student to participate in the activity, regardless of their individual strengths and weaknesses, which Lawrence-Brown (2004) suggests is a necessary trait of an effective teacher.

Class 2

In the teacher survey, Teacher 2 stated “I use homogeneous reading groups and peer teaching to differentiate my instruction for English Language Learners.” For the purposes of coding, these two strategies were categorized into consideration of various learning styles and abilities and cooperative learning based on research by Lawrence-Brown (2004). According to the observation checklist, these strategies were observed once and twice respectively in the 12 hours of observation that were completed in Class 2. She did, however, unknowingly use other methods of differentiated instruction including realia, consideration of student experiences, technology, visual aids and picture supports. The most pervasive method was visual aids, which she used about 70% of the observation time.

Class 2, Example 1 (Differentiated Instruction):

Much of the observation took place during social studies. The most common visual aids observed were maps related to the content being discussed. When these maps were used, the teacher did not model or explain to the students how they could be used to support their learning, she simply told them to use them. Some of the students proceeded

to use them for clarification and to gain more information, but many did not. There was not any other evidence of differentiated instruction observed at the time of the class visits. Each student, including the inclusion students and English Language Learners were provided with the same activity to complete, with the same amount of support as the native speakers in the classroom. Student A worked quietly with occasional interaction in Spanish with a nearby student. Student B sat next to another student who worked independently on the task. Student B proceeded to copy the answers the other student wrote, with no questions, personal effort or further interaction with the other student or with the teacher. Crothers (2008) suggested that it is important to consider the students' language abilities when asking them to perform or complete a task, as providing the same education to minority students as to native speakers is a violation of their civil rights because it inhibits their ability to participate meaningfully in the lesson.

Class 2, Example 2 (Differentiated Instruction):

During a health activity, the students were asked to categorize different foods into their respective food group. The students were able to do this fairly easily with familiar foods, but became challenged when the foods were uncommon, such as cabbage and pecans. The names of the foods were on a list, and there were not any pictures provided to support the vocabulary. The students who were considered non-English speakers received the same list, but had a special education aide for support. She verbally explained the foods, but the students were still unsure of what they were. One student suggested they be allowed to look it up on the internet, and they were allowed to do so, but that was the extent of the teacher involvement in the matter.

Comparison of Class 1 and 2 (Differentiated Instruction)

Teacher 1 started off by specifically stating her awareness, understanding and intent to differentiate instruction for her students that spoke English as a Second Language. She purposefully thought out each activity and incorporated various levels, supports, and a variety of input techniques to allow her students as many opportunities as possible to understand what was being taught and to more importantly use the information more independently later. She demonstrated that she was consistently aware of the students' ZPD and that she had the intention to work within the students' abilities and needs to help them be as successful as possible.

Teacher 2 managed to differentiate some of her instruction, but there was little to no awareness of what that looked like or how to manage it. She stated in her survey that she used leveled grouping and peer support to differentiate for students who had less exposure to the English language, but the students were not instructed specifically how to make their interactions differentiated for their partners and/or groups. Additionally, when she used the other supports mentioned above as associated with DI, she did not explain to the students how to use them, what they were for, or why they were associated to the lesson, their learning, or the development of their language.

Question 3: Scaffolding

The third and final research question was posed to see how teachers of English Language Learners scaffold their instruction in the mainstream classroom to allow growth within students' Zone of Proximal Development. For the purposes of data analysis, scaffolding activities that were taken into consideration were gaining learner's interest, simplifying the task when needed, highlighting relevant features of the task, maintaining learner motivation, controlling learner frustration, and modeling expected

behaviors and actions. For purposes of language learning specifically, learners go through five general stages of language acquisition: preproduction, early production, speech emergence, intermediate fluency, and advanced fluency. Hill (2006) explains that every learner is unique, but each language learning stage holds an approximate time frame, as well as general approaches a teacher can take to scaffold the students' learning to help them develop into the next stage. Knowledge of these stages is imperative for the teacher to be able to scaffold students within their ZPD so they are not stagnated in a stage with too simple of a task and not frustrated with too difficult of a task. When a skill is outside of the ZPD, children generally ignore, fail to use, or incorrectly use that skill. By observing a child's reactions, teachers will know if the assistance they have provided falls within the ZPD. Bodrova (2007) suggests that effective teachers will make note of what prompts, clues, hints, books, activities, or cooperative activities have the desired effect on the child's learning. Effective teachers will also use this information to guide their instruction, as well as be flexible enough to change their plans if what they are doing is not effectively assisting the student as they had anticipated.

Class 1

In Class 1, scaffolding was a consistent occurrence. With the benefit of having parent volunteers, Teacher 1 mentioned her ability to have multiple adults in the room to scaffold students as they engaged in various activities throughout the day. In her survey, she stated "I write up procedures and questions for each center so the parents can scaffold the students' learning. For example, if a student is at the blocks center, I might give the volunteer instructions to have dialogue with the student about measurement (ask them how many blocks tall their structure is, which is shorter, etc.). I give them a range of things to discuss with the students depending on where they are. I strategically place the parents who are bilingual to be the ones that are able to rove around the room and

converse with all the students.” Mohan (2008) indicated that a great way to maximize class time is to impart the assistance of other paraprofessionals and adult volunteers effectively.

Teacher 1 routinely modeled all expected behaviors and actions so the students were aware of what they were expected to do and what the desired learning outcomes looked and sounded like. She, her aide or parent helpers provided immediate feedback to the students, and taught them to do the same for each other. The students were guided to perform linguistically simplified tasks when necessary, and were slowly guided to the next level of activity next time they had the opportunity to try to increase their ability to work independently. Since most of the students in that Pre-Kindergarten class were between Preproduction and Early Production being that they had less than a year of experience with the English language, a lot of their scaffolding included prompts such as: Show me...Where is....Who has....., as well as yes or no questions, and questions that don't require expanded explanation. The teacher would then explain why the answer was yes or no for the student, and encourage the students that were ready to add their explanations when they could. This stage requires a lot of modeling and flexibility. It should be completely acceptable for a child in these early stages to respond non verbally. Mercer (2007) explained that this special type of assistance is intended to help the learner reach a similar or higher level of achievement on their own in a later situation.

Class1 , Example 1 (Scaffolding):

During centers, Teacher 1 called students to her for small group instruction in writing. The group was specifically called based on need. The class had been discussing and practicing the word “am” throughout the week. Teacher 1 said, “Today you are going to write about yourself using ‘I am’.” What could you say? Student responded, “I am me.” Teacher 1 asked him to be more specific. He was silent, indicating he didn't know what

she meant. After a couple of minutes of think time, Teacher 1 explained, “You could write ‘I am Jacob’.” He responded, “Oh, Ok.” She continued and asked him what he could draw to go with his sentence and he responded. “Jacob.” He drew his illustration of himself first, then was ready to begin writing his sentence. Teacher 1 continued to scaffold him within his ZPD because he was showing that he was not ready to write the sentence on his own. She asked him, “How do you start?” After think time when he did not begin, she hinted, “Sky-cross-cross” (Indicating a hint she had used before on how to write the letter I). He wrote it. Next, she told him to move on to the next word, “am.” He didn’t write anything and she hinted, “What letter says /a/?” He responded “I can’t write it unless I look at the book.” She offered to write it for him and allow him to trace it. He traced it and was then ready to write the final word, his name. He used his name tag to copy his name, while he chanted “Jacob, Jacob, Jacob.” When he was finished, Teacher 1 instructed him to re-read his sentence aloud to her and then prompted him to complete his project with a punctuation mark. “What do you write to say the sentence is over?” He responded, “a circle.” She gave him the feedback, “Yes, that circle is called a period. You wrote a sentence today Jacob! A choo-choo train of words!” Teacher 1 realized that her original expectation for this learner was not appropriate for him to be successful, and as Mohan (2008) suggests for effective teaching, she adjusted her approach to meet his needs so he had the skills to complete a similar activity independently at a later time.

Class 1, Example 2 (Scaffolding):

Teacher 1 made an observable effort to gain the learner’s interest, highlight the relevant features of the lesson, and maintain their motivation. She modeled everything in a variety of ways and consistently checked for understanding and simplified the task when necessary for the students that needed her to without reducing the level of learning. During a literacy read aloud, the teacher began by telling the students the objective of the

lesson and having them repeat it. She asked them why they thought that objective was important and examples of student responses were: “For know” and “ To know letters to read and write”. It is important for students to know the purpose of their activities and become active thinkers and planners in their own learning. Mohan (2008) believes this academic self-regulation becomes more evident when students set goals for their learning, and become involved in controlling their progress. Teacher 1 continued the lesson by introducing key vocabulary words and showing a picture representation of each word. She followed this by telling them every time they heard one of the vocabulary words in the story, to clap their hands to identify it. To monitor understanding, she continually used encouragement and stated expectations by saying things such as “If you are participating, I know you are learning” to sort out students who really did not understand and students who were not trying. Her students were almost always on task, engaged and participating due to her efforts to include everyone.

Class 2

In Class 2, scaffolding was a less frequent occurrence during the observations. In some instances the teacher obtained the learner’s interest, highlighted relevant features of the task, and attempted to control the learner’s frustration, but the focus students (non-English speakers) were still unable to complete the task meaningfully after these modifications. The non-English speakers in the room, though they were much older than Class 1, were still in the Pre-Production stage of language development, which indicates they had minimal comprehension. Regardless of any of the efforts Teacher 2 made to control the learner frustration, she did not modify their activity to allow them to respond without words, or in an alternative way so they were still unable to complete the task asked of them. Pawan (2008) believes adequate scaffolding should allow students to be integrated into content-area instruction with opportunities to communicate their

understanding without a complete reliance on language.

Class 2, Example 1 (Scaffolding)

During the health activity mentioned above where the students were to categorize food into food groups, Teacher 2 attempted to control the learner frustration by allowing them to pair up with someone else in the class to help them work through the vocabulary, but the partners did not seem to understand what their role was to successfully scaffold their partner, as it was not modeled for them. The room was very quiet, especially for a cooperative activity, so the teacher addressed the whole group. “This is supposed to be a discussion, so support your buddy and make sure they know the vocabulary.” The partnerships ended up being the students sitting together and working independently, or the less able student copying from the more proficient student. Van Lier (1996) suggests that the teacher does not have to be the party providing the scaffolding support during instruction or activities, but the party who is should be capable of conveying the information correctly and collaborating effectively with the less capable learner.

Class 2, Example 2 (Scaffolding)

During a social studies activity where the students were reading a magazine about the war, the students were reading aloud and discussing the article. The teacher gained the students’ interest by questioning them about the purpose of the war and seeing if anyone had a personal connection to the events going on. Some students had family members in the armed forces, so they were engaged and motivated. The students were responsible for reading the article aloud, which was above most of their reading levels. In order to control the learner frustration, the students were given the option to call on another student if they got to a word or a part of the article that was too difficult for them to read. Neither during the reading, nor following the reading of the article were any questions asked to further provoke the thinking of the students, or even to check for their

understanding of what was being read. This was another opportunity where the student responses could have given the teacher a signal as to what stage the students were in that could have allowed her to scaffold them more effectively to be able to do a similar activity independently, or more importantly let her know that the activity was beyond their stage of development and intervened more heavily within their ZPD to allow them to feel more successful and get more out of the learning experience. Additionally, during the course of the reading, the students were encountering a lot of new vocabulary such as “allies”, “deteriorating”, and “withdraw”. Teacher 2 brought the students’ attention to these words, and asked them what they meant. She called on volunteers to answer the questions, and though they were able to answer the question, there was no additional support to explain how they got that answer, which Pawan (2008) indicated would be a beneficial strategy to assist students who were unfamiliar with the vocabulary to use at a later time when encountering a similar challenge.

Comparison of Class 1 and 2 (Scaffolding)

Teacher 1 continued to demonstrate her awareness of her students’ needs, their ZPD, and her own flexibility as an instructor. She planned with an objective in mind, envisioned a desired outcome, and selected the appropriate activities, support, and modifications necessary to get each student there, regardless of their independent level going into the activity. She took into consideration the students’ level of language production and accepted answers appropriate for that level, and gave feedback that would allow them to understand what the next stage could be.

Teacher 2 seemed to have a general idea of what scaffolding was, based on her survey response and some of her classroom strategies used, but she did not seem to push for this to be a prevailing method of her instruction. There were no instances observed where she provided direct feedback in an effort to get a student to achieve a new level of

understanding, nor was she observed in modeling how peer interaction and scaffolding should look so that they could support each other correctly and effectively.

Comparison of Class 1 and Class 2 (Overall)

During the observations in this study, Teacher 1 was aware, thoughtful and purposeful in using interaction, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding together in her classroom to improve the quality of the learning experience of her English Language Learners. To support the observation experience, her responses to the survey questions (Appendix B) demonstrated that she was educated on how to identify students' strengths and weaknesses in relationship to their ZPD so she could use the above mentioned methods to assist students to make marked improvement in both content area and language simultaneously. When observing her classroom, the students appeared to be motivated, engaged, and supportive of each other. Teacher 1 spent a great deal of time modeling concepts, appropriate interactions, skills, and expectations. Her students were often observed modeling in the same ways she did for each other. In addition to academic scaffolding, Teacher 1 demonstrated a connection to both cultural scaffolding and social scaffolding. She made an obvious effort to develop a personal relationship with her students and to use what she discovered about their cultural heritage in their learning to make them feel like valuable members of the classroom. Additionally, as Pawan (2008) suggests is effective, she used student-centered activities to show them how to successfully participate in cooperative learning .

Teacher 2 in both the observations and survey, was less aware of the effectiveness and importance of these components of teaching English Language Learners. She was rarely observed interacting with her students outside of direct instruction and structured IRF exchanges. She was not observed modeling interaction, use of materials, or expectations to her students. She seemed unaware of the challenges her limited English

speakers faced. According to her survey, she did not seem to have the educational background specific to these strategies to assist them effectively, as her answers were vague and did not suggest her intent to use them regularly in the classroom. Activities she had planned had the potential to be extended to include these strategies to assist these students more effectively, but this was not observed during the hours of research. The effects of this on the students seemed to be that they lacked the ability to support each other, and in many cases perform the required tasks in the absence of the teacher's direct instruction.

Both classes were composed of students at varying levels of English Language proficiency. Both teachers cared about their students and their survey responses supported the fact that they wanted their students to be successful. The main difference was that Teacher 1 demonstrated the ability to identify the students' linguistic needs and modified her instruction, expectations and supports based on those needs, whereas Teacher 2 seemed to have the same expectations and methods for all her students.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Discussion and Implications

This study explored contemporary classrooms in Clark County School District and the strategies used to support mainstreamed English Language Learners. By means of evaluating data obtained from observing classroom teachers and their practices, I was able to analyze and interpret activities and instruction that involved interaction, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding of the students' learning. In addition, to provide a more in-depth view of the practices and philosophies of the teachers that taught these classes, I interviewed the teacher participants and had them complete a survey that further explained their position as a practitioner. There were many student participants, and their experiences were all taken into consideration during the observations, though at times the focus turned to students that were clearly less experienced with the English language.

What may have seemed to be a major limitation of this study actually became a strength. The classes that were allowed to be observed were drastically different from each other. The differences allowed comparison between the two, but the resources each teacher had varied. Additionally, students entering Pre-Kindergarten generally are all starting fresh with their first at school experience, as fourth graders have a larger range of abilities, experiences in school, and challenges. Class 2 was also substantially larger, without access to an aide to support the teacher on a regular basis, whereas Class 1 had a full time aide and regular parent volunteers. As the research progressed and the teachers were also compared based on their survey responses, though they had a similar amount of experience, their knowledge and interest in teaching English Language Learners was quite different. Such differences brought to light the need to have awareness of the

impact the differences in the approaches and resources between the primary and intermediate grades. There are still students of varying levels and despite an intermediate student's age and background knowledge, when it comes to language acquisition, they still have the same stages to grow through to be a proficient speaker of English and an academically capable student.

A major limitation was that the teacher and student participants did not consent to being videotaped or audio-taped, so all the data collected in the classroom was available at the time of observation only. I made every effort to take diligent and detailed field notes, but I was left without an option of going back to see if there was anything that I missed. Additionally, when I was taking notes it is possible that I noticed certain things because of my focus on the research questions, which could have restricted my ability to notice something I was not looking for.

Another consideration during the research was the inability to correlate the data with student achievement. Many times in order for schools and teachers to consider integrating new strategies and practices into their teaching, they want to see how it directly improves or relates to data and achievement. Though research suggests that all of the strategies mentioned in the study do directly improve student achievement, there were not any assessment tools used in this study to support that claim.

Benefits to Participants

According to Fry (2008), the number of English Language Learners in today's classrooms is significantly higher than it has been in the past, and the number continues to grow rapidly, specifically accounting for 60% of total growth in public schools from 1990-1996, and now make up 1 in 5 public school students in the United States. Additionally, teachers are not being adequately trained to work with these students in a

productive manner, therefore many of these students are receiving less than adequate instruction, and not reaching their potential, graduating at a high enough rate, nor moving on to higher education at the same rate as their same age peers that do not have the challenge of speaking a second language. It is extremely important that these deficiencies in schools and classrooms are taken note of and changed so this negative trend can be changed.

Since the instruction I observed was not changed or enhanced in any way because of the study, the results of the study can create awareness for teachers to improve their instruction of English Language Learners. Due to the fact this was an actual depiction of realistic classrooms, it is proof that these strategies can be manageable in today's classrooms once the teachers become aware and trained on how to effectively facilitate them. As a teacher, I am aware of the challenges in meeting the needs of all students, especially students who come from various backgrounds and abilities. Students that come from another country and language background have specific needs and there are strategies, as mentioned in this study, that teachers can and should use to help them become successful members of their learning community. If this study can illustrate the use of the strategies, and the lack thereof, these students, or students in a similar circumstance can potentially receive improved instruction that will make their educational experience more effective and worthwhile for them. Additionally, Fry (2008) relates the importance Hispanic parents place on education. He conducted a survey in 2007 and 95% of Hispanic parents asked stated that education was either "extremely" or "very" important. Educators must recognize that these families are our clients and need to be serviced with respect and dignity.

Pedagogical Implications of the Study

Newcomers in American schools and English Language Learners who have not yet learned enough social and academic language to perform at the same level as their English speaking peers continue to struggle. Teachers need to know specifically what works to help integrate them better into the classroom environment they already have. Through this study, what seems to stand out the most even beyond the strategies that seem to be most effective, is that teachers need to be aware of the linguistic capabilities of their students, what strategies work with each student, and how to assist them to move through their personal Zone of Proximal Development. Teaching English Language Learners can be difficult, especially when they are not necessarily “newcomers” anymore, but seem to be capable with the language because they communicate socially with the language. Teachers then seem to expect students to naturally work at the same academic level as their native speaking peers, forgetting that as Lawrence-Brown (2004) explains, ELL students should not be treated as a group of students, but nourished as individual learners. This awareness can then allow the teachers to choose which strategy will be necessary for which lesson and content area so they can be prepared to meet these various needs as they come up. Additionally, teachers could use the information from this study to distinguish when it is appropriate to have certain expectations of their students. As per Class 1, Example 1 (Scaffolding), Teacher 1 wanted the student to write a sentence. After seeing that her expectations of the students performance was not appropriate within his ZPD, she was flexible and adjusted her methods. In this way, he could still meet her expectations, but with support so the learning experience was still meaningful, it still met the objective she had in mind, but did not frustrate the student. Mohan (2008) suggested that an ideal practice would be to identify individual needs and provide supporting instruction so that the student could reach a higher level than before.

It seems that many times older students are expected to perform to unrealistic expectations regardless of their knowledge of the target language. The above mentioned flexibility still applies, including the method of which the child communicates his knowledge. As per Class 2, Example 3 (Interaction), a fourth grade student who was still in the pre-production stage of English, indicating that she was still non-verbal and though she may have understood some verbal instruction, she was unable to produce the language independently to answer questions. She was given a worksheet to complete based on the lesson, and a partner for support, but was still expected to answer the questions in written format. If the teacher had been aware of the language acquisition stages, she could have given her another option to demonstrate her knowledge to see how much the student understood from the lesson.

In all, educators have to be flexible, aware of the of the appropriate methods to use when working with English Language Learners, as well as know their students' strengths and weaknesses in relationship to their ZPD so they can effectively teach them, and also monitor their knowledge and growth so they can adjust their instruction and assessment methods as needed.

Research Implications of the Study

There are studies that focus on teachers applying the recommended practices to improve the education of English Language Learners in their classrooms, but they were difficult to find, which makes this information minimally accessible to the average teacher. Most research that was readily available was focused on the theoretical ideals that guide such practices, but there was less information that shows what these practices look like in action, and how they actually improve an individual student's educational experience. There are many theories out there that teachers examine, discuss and

approach on their own, but it is a challenge to incorporate the theoretical practices into actual classrooms without seeing what it looks like and a firm understanding of how to facilitate them correctly. Teachers also want to know what benefits their practices will bring to their students and need to be able to deliver the instruction with confidence.

The more research that is done in this area, the more accessible the specialized knowledge of effectively meeting the needs of English language learners will become for mainstream classroom teachers, increasing the probability that the information will become more wide spread and used throughout the educational community.

Another area of interest would be to examine students from a case study perspective to get specific details of the benefits of facilitating interaction, differentiated instruction, and scaffolding to improve an English Language Learner's ability to understand what is being taught in a mainstream classroom, as well as participate meaningfully within their ability. Case studies could then be compared for similarities, as all students come to school with their own strengths and weaknesses, it would be necessary to sort out other factors to draw conclusions on these specific points.

In the future to adequately determine if gains are being made in the way of language, it will be important to use assessment tools which adequately assesses a student's progress in acquiring language, specifically English. There has been research that determined that standardized tests are not a good measure of ELLs student knowledge, because they are biased and indirectly set the students up to fail because of the vocabulary, language dependent skills, and some situational or cultural contexts that are unfamiliar to students from certain cultures. (Nitsiou, 2006). It would be imperative to use an assessment tool that is designed specifically for these students in order to correctly measure their language and content knowledge. Without this, a disadvantage still exists for both the students taking the test and the teachers analyzing the results to guide their

future instruction since at this time the most common assessment tool is a standardized test that is normed on students from the mainstream population. These assessment tools do exist, but the lack of them present at a school with such a large ELL population suggests that their value is not yet accepted or known of by all institutions with this population of students.

Recommendations for Instruction

Teachers can look at this study and learn about specific strategies that can be used in the classroom to support their English Language Learners, as well as gain understanding of the common needs of all students regardless of grade level. The content knowledge that is taught from year to year is going to change and expand, but the support to students and their individual needs are just as important, regardless of their grade level. Teachers from each grade level can provide ideas and support to each other to figure out how to integrate these strategies across the curriculum in all grades and how to manage this with larger class sizes and potentially less outside support.

Teacher 1 demonstrated that all of the strategies mentioned in this study, interaction in the classroom, differentiated instruction and scaffolding are all valuable to a child's learning experience. She was also proof that it is possible to integrate all of these strategies every day in a classroom. She has a significant amount of experience that has been built over time, and a teacher deciding to begin integrating these strategies should not feel pressured to do everything all at once. All of these things work together and build on each other, but to avoid frustration and burn out, a teacher could begin with the strategy they feel most comfortable with, and once it has been successfully incorporated into their classroom system, begin adding the other strategies to build up to the ideal setting for the English Language Learners in their classroom.

Perhaps the most important recommendation following this study is to acknowledge the component of the teacher's role in the classroom. The classrooms should be student focused, and the outcomes are determined by what the students demonstrate as their abilities, but the attitude, education and effort of the teacher are essential. When the teacher makes the effort to first scaffold a student culturally and socially and integrate them comfortably into the classroom community, she had begun to build a relationship that will continue to inspire learning. When the teacher considers each student's needs as an individual, this relationship continues to grow, and the student is comfortable enough to learn. If done correctly, the student can begin to take ownership of his own learning and retain the lessons from the teacher as he moves forward in his education. The teacher's role in the classroom is critical, as is her continuing education towards learning about teaching all students, specifically English Language Learners as this population continues to grow in our school communities. Einstein once said, "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Teachers need to be fully aware of what is working with their students and what is not. Teaching must become a reflective practice, and teachers need to be continually reworking their practice, attempting to improve the results of their efforts. This study could provide a starting point to teachers who have a similar demographic of students that they would like to better service in their classrooms.

Conclusion

As suggested by this study, there are strategies a teacher can use to create a meaningful learning experience for English Language Learners in mainstream classrooms. From the observations done and surveys completed by the teachers, it was clear that these strategies were not common knowledge for all teachers. Both teachers

reported being told that instruction for English Language Learners is simply really good teaching. Teacher 1 consistently used all of the strategies that were related to the study, but interesting enough, she honestly stated she was using these strategies with content area concepts in mind, they were not being used to specifically improve students' linguistic ability, they were just a part of her everyday good practices. Teacher 2 used the strategies in a limited fashion, but significantly less than Teacher 1, and she did not seem aware of how what she was doing was actually impacting the education of her students. Though the classes were different by grade level, size, and general support systems within the school itself, the student populations were relatively similar, therefore the students should have been receiving similar instruction. It is important to note the length of time it takes for an ELL student to be considered linguistically capable of performing at the same level as their native speaking peers, which can range from 5-10 years, depending on the students' educational background in their native language. Students in the fourth grade are still in need of receiving supportive instruction, and despite the limitations of class size and resources, the teacher has a responsibility to be sure this happens.

APPENDIX A
THESIS SURVEY QUESTIONS

- 1) How many years of teaching experience do you have?
- 2) What grade levels have you taught/how long in each?
- 3) What is your educational background (bachelors, masters,etc.) and from what schools? What degrees have you received (any special focus?)
- 4) Why did you become a teacher?
- 5) Do you have any personal experience with English Language Learners (family members or anyone close to you)?
- 6) Do you purposefully differentiate your instruction? If so, how?
- 7) Do you purposefully scaffold your instruction? If so, how?
- 8) Do you use cooperative learning in your class/Kagan? If so, please give a brief example of when you feel it's appropriate.
- 9) What is your opinion of students using their native language in the classroom?
- 10) Do you ask for assistance/support from aides/parent helpers? If so, in what type of situation?
- 11) What types of things do you think increase student motivation and confidence?
- 12) Do you feel ELL's should be placed in separate classes from native speakers? Why or why not?

APPENDIX B
SURVEY RESPONSES

Teacher 1

- 1) This is my 7th year.
- 2) I taught Kindergarten for four years and this is my third year of Title I Pre-K.
- 3) My undergrad is from Michigan State University. I have 24 credits towards a Master's in Early Childhood Education at the University of Phoenix and I'm just about to finish that Master's at UNLV this summer...finally! I could only transfer a few credits from UOP to UNLV.
- 4) I realized that working with children was something I was naturally good at and enjoyed.
- 5) In Michigan it seemed like everyone was white so no experience there but I suppose growing up in Hawaii exposed me to ELL a little but nothing compared to coming to Vegas! Now my husband is a second language person and we deal with that all the time.
- 6) I try to reach all students through as many types of instruction as possible, visual, auditory, tactile, etc. When I present a new concept to them, say vocabulary, I might show picture examples, we might sing about it for a week, write about it, translate it into Spanish (since that is what most of my children speak at home), they might see the same concept in all the centers. Also, I pull small groups (supposed to be daily, one level a day). I use their ability to communicate and their knowledge of the letters to sort them. It might be that each of my groups is doing something different each day if that's what each of them needs. If the lowest group just needs to review the vocab from the week, that's what we do, my highest might be guided reading that same week! It just depends on what they need, that's why Pre-K is so awesome, no one pushes me to push them along.
- 7) I think this is part of the reason I love my family volunteers. I write up procedures and questions for them to ask at each of the centers so they can scaffold the children's learning while in their centers. For example, if a student is at the blocks center, I might give the volunteer instructions to have dialogue with the student about measurement (ask them how many blocks tall, which is shorter, etc). I give them a range of things to discuss with the students depending on where they are and I strategically place the parents who are bilingual to be the ones to rove around the room and converse with all the students.
- 8) We try to implement Kagan on a weekly basis if not daily basis. Our favorite is similarity grouping. The students sort each other by letters, animals, etc. This can be

wonderful for my ELL students because I can purposely pair them with a bilingual student who can explain the directions to them if they notice their “buddy” is lost.

9) Definitely in the beginning I want them to use the language they are most comfortable in. Then, if they’re ready to communicate with me in English, when and how often is also determined by them. I want my room to be multi-cultural and that includes allowing them to bring their home language into the classroom. I do expect them to try to learn the English alphabet but I am one of the teachers who cringe when I hear teachers say “you’re at school, use your English words”. To exclude their home language is like cutting out a part of them, taking away their voice, if anything. I try to fix things on my end to meet them half way (learn the language, solicit bilingual parents, etc.)

10) In addition to what I mentioned above, I have our weekly newsletter translated and I try to translate everything that goes home. I would not be as successful in the classroom if I didn’t have assistants and parent helpers, especially bilingual volunteers!

11) I think establishing trust with the student through consistency and positivity is a must in teaching. I don’t ever want a student to feel threatened by me because then their mind can’t be free to learn. I think, when students are comfortable in their learning environment and the environment is fun and exciting and they are motivated to learn naturally at this age. Also, incorporating real life learning and tying their home life into the classroom (through play, themes, etc) students learn without knowing they are actually being educated.

12) Hmm, it depends on who the teacher is. I definitely think ELL students need support and if they can’t get it in the mainstream classroom then I think they might need periods of time to get instruction from someone who is specialized in teaching ELL students. However, I think with the proper support, ELL students need to be educated with their peers, even if they speak a different language for many reasons. Separating them divides them from their same age peers and does not give them ample exposure to the English language, which also needs to be learned socially. To me, in a perfect world, all teachers would be given the training and support to effectively differentiate their instruction to meet the needs of both ELL and English speaking students. Unfortunately, I do not see this happen often.

Teacher 2

- 1) 12
- 2) K-one year, 2nd-three years, 4th-eight years
- 3) UNLV-1997 Bachelors of Science in Elem. Ed. Nova SouthEastern University –
June 2008 Masters of Science-Administrative Leadership
- 4) To make a difference
- 5) No
- 6) Yes, homogenous reading groups, peer teaching in all subjects to assist ELL
- 7) Most of the time no, but with guided reading I do to make sure the students get the skills they need.
- 8) I use turn pair share, work with shoulder buddy and face buddy in math to work on word problems.
- 9) I prefer them not to so they use the English language as much as possible so they can eventually master English
- 10) Whenever I can to help with students, bulletin boards, conferencing with writing, math tutoring.
- 11) I use a lot of positive reinforcement and reward incentives
- 12) No, because the more they are immersed in English in the regular setting, they will master English faster.

APPENDIX C

OBSERVATION CHECKLIST SAMPLE

	Ob 1	Ob 2	Ob. 3	Ob. 4	Ob. 5	Ob. 6	Ob. 7	Ob. 8	Ob. 9	Ob. 10	Ob. 11	Ob. 12
Differentiated Instruction												
Hands on, concrete, realia												
Cooperative learning												
Considered student interests and experiences												
Technology												
Manipulatives												
Visual aides												
Picture supports												
Audio supports												
Purposeful structure of school day/lessons												
Considered Various Learning Styles												

Scaffolding												
Got learner's interest												
Simplified task												
Highlighted relevant features of task												
Maintained motivation												
Controlled learner frustration												
Modeled expected behaviors/actions												

Observation Checklist – Class 1

	Ob 1	Ob 2	Ob. 3	Ob. 4	Ob. 5	Ob. 6	Ob. 7	Ob. 8	Ob. 9	Ob. 10	Ob. 11	Ob. 12
Differentiated Instruction												
Hands on, concrete, realia	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Cooperative learning	X		x	X	X		X	X		X		x
Considered student interests and experiences	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Technology	X		X		X		X	X	X		x	
Manipulatives	X	X	X	X	X		X			X		x
Visual aides	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Picture supports	X	X				X	X	X	X	X		x
Audio supports	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Purposeful structure of school day/lessons	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Considered Various Learning Styles	X	X	X	X			X	X	X	X		x

Scaffolding												
Got learner's interest	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Simplified task	X	X	X	X	X				X	X	X	x
Highlighted relevant features of task	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Maintained motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x
Controlled learner frustration	X			X	X	X	X	X		X	X	x
Modeled expected behaviors/actions	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	x

Class 1

Differentiated Instruction Totals: 100/120 capitalized opportunities were noted in observations.

Scaffolding Totals: 66/72 capitalized opportunities were noted in observations.

Observation Checklist – Class 2

	Ob 1	Ob 2	Ob. 3	Ob. 4	Ob. 5	Ob. 6	Ob. 7	Ob. 8	Ob. 9	Ob. 10	Ob. 11	Ob. 12
Differentiated Instruction												
Hands on, concrete, realia	X	X				X	X					
Cooperative learning				X	X							
Considered student interests and experiences		X	X				X	X				
Technology					X	X						
Manipulatives												
Visual aides	X	X	X	X	X	X			X			
Picture supports			X	X								
Audio supports												
Purposeful structure of school day/lessons						X	X					
Considered Various Learning Styles										X		

Scaffolding												
Got learner's interest		X	X		X							
Simplified task			X			X			X			
Highlighted relevant features of task	X		X							X		
Maintained motivation			X								X	
Controlled learner frustration										X		
Modeled expected behaviors/actions												

Class 2

Differentiated Instruction Totals: 24-120 capitalized opportunities were observed.

Scaffolding: 12/72 capitalized opportunities were observed.



Social/Behavioral IRB – Full Board Review Approval Notice



NOTICE TO ALL RESEARCHERS:

Please be aware that a protocol violation (e.g., failure to submit a modification for any change) of an IRB approved protocol may result in mandatory remedial education, additional audits, re-consenting subjects, researcher probation suspension of any research protocol at issue, suspension of additional existing research protocols, invalidation of all research conducted under the research protocol at issue, and further appropriate consequences as determined by the IRB and the Institutional Officer.

DATE: April 24, 2008
TO: Dr. Steven McCafferty, Curriculum and Instruction
FROM: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
RE: Notification of IRB Action *CE*
Protocol Title: **Interaction and Language Development in Today's Classrooms**
Protocol #: 0802-2613

This memorandum is notification that the project referenced above has been reviewed by the UNLV Social/Behavioral Institutional Review Board (IRB) as indicated in Federal regulatory statutes 45CFR46. The protocol has been reviewed and approved.

The protocol is approved for a period of one year from the date of IRB approval. The expiration date of this protocol is April 9, 2009. Work on the project may begin as soon as you receive written notification from the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects (OPRS).

PLEASE NOTE:

Attached to this approval notice is the **official Informed Consent/Assent (IC/IA) Form** for this study. The IC/IA contains an official approval stamp. Only copies of this official IC/IA form may be used when obtaining consent. Please keep the original for your records.

Should there be *any* change to the protocol, it will be necessary to submit a **Modification Form** through OPRS. No changes may be made to the existing protocol until modifications have been approved by the IRB.

Should the use of human subjects described in this protocol continue beyond April 9, 2009, it would be necessary to submit a **Continuing Review Request Form** 60 days before the expiration date.

If you have questions or require any assistance, please contact the Office for the Protection of Research Subjects at OPRSHumanSubjects@unlv.edu or call 895-2794.

Office for the Protection of Research Subjects
4505 Maryland Parkway • Box 451047 • Las Vegas, Nevada 89154-1047

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VITA
Graduate College
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Beth Ralston

Degrees:

Bachelor of Arts, Elementary Education, 2004
University of Nevada, Las Vegas

Special Honors and Awards:

Outstanding contributions to Youth, New York State Office of Children and
Family Services, May 2001
Teacher of the Month, Clark County School District, June 2007

Thesis Title: Interaction and Language Development of ELL Students in Mainstream
Classrooms

Thesis Examination Committee:

Chairperson, Steven McCafferty, Ph.D.
Committee Member, John Butcher, Ph.D.
Committee Member, LeAnn Putney, Ph.D.
Committee Member, Shaoan Zhang, Ph.D.