Strategies for monolingual instructions to use when teaching reading comprehension to bilingual students

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STRATEGIES FOR MONOLINGUAL INSTRUCTORS TO USE WHEN TEACHING
READING COMPREHENSION TO BILINGUAL STUDENTS

A Project
Presented to the
Faculty of
California State University,
San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts
in
Education:
Reading/Language Arts

by
Toni Marie Bastian
September 2001
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Approved by:

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ABSTRACT

The research problem which fueled this Master’s project, was the need for strategies for monolingual teachers to make text comprehensible to students who were bilingual.

Research showed that bilingual students learn best when supported in their own language. But, projections of California schools has shown that although the numbers of bilingual students will increase, the numbers of bilingual teachers will not.

The major finding of this project is that through the use of multiple sign systems, monolingual teachers can support their bilingual students. These strategies employ the use of comprehensible input from the teacher, peer interaction, extended language and activities for the students whose primary focus is to help the students make connections from the text to their own lives.

By using these sign systems in my own classroom, in flexible groups, it is clear these sign systems do help the ELL students better comprehend what they are reading.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**ABSTRACT** ........................................ iii

**CHAPTER ONE: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**
- Introduction ...................................... 1
- Statement of Problem ............................ 2
- Recommendation ................................. 4

**CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**
- Introduction ...................................... 6
- Reading Strategies ............................... 7
- Multiple Sign Systems ......................... 11
- Sign Systems ..................................... 13
- Graphics ......................................... 15
- Artistic Interpretation ........................ 18
- Comprehensible Input ........................... 21
- Social Interaction ............................... 23
- Conclusion ...................................... 27

**CHAPTER THREE: MULTIPLE SIGN SYSTEMS**
- Introduction ...................................... 29
- Arranging the Groups ........................... 29
- Independent Activities ......................... 32
- Culminating Activities ........................ 40

**CHAPTER FOUR: ASSESSMENT**
- Introduction ...................................... 42
- What is Assessment ............................. 42
- Response Tests .................................. 44
CHAPTER ONE

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction

The mission of schools has always been to provide an education to all who come through their doors. But, this mission has had to change with the complexity of the times. California schools, in particular, are faced with the challenge of not only educating children, but educating children whose first language is not, in many cases, English. The numbers of students who come to schools speaking languages other than English consistently rises every year. As of three years ago, more than 2 million children in California school's were not fluent in English. Three-fourths of these students are Spanish speakers (The Elementary School Journal, 1999). Demographic predictions for these schools indicate that ethnic group percentages will rise by about 80 per cent by the year 2007. In this same time period the white student population is expected to decline by approximately 16 per cent (Quezada, Wiley & Ramirez, 1999, 2000)

Unfortunately, the numbers of bilingual teachers in the classrooms are not keeping pace with the numbers of bilingual students. Leading researcher Steven Krashen and others contend that bilingual students learn best when taught in their native languages. But, because of the
bilingual teacher shortage, how can monolingual teachers provide that support? Even if California teacher training programs mandated that new teachers become fluent in a second language, chances are the bilingual students' native languages might not be the teacher's second language. Furthermore, Proposition 227 was passed in California on June 2, 1998. The intent of this Proposition was to derail California's bilingual programs. This Proposition mandates that instruction be given "overwhelmingly" in English for students whose first language is not English. While some schools have complied, others have not, and continue to offer Bilingual programs to students. But, the effectiveness of these programs has long been questioned. According to the Bilingual Education Handbook, an effective Bilingual program uses,

"the language the child is familiar with from his or her upbringing...to expand the student's general knowledge of the world and higher-order thinking skills until a command of English is developed sufficiently to allow a transition to the mainstream program," (California Department of Education, 1990)

Critics of Bilingual education contend that often students are prematurely mainstreamed into regular classes before they have achieved cognitive academic language proficiency.

Statement of Problem
Lack of proficiency, particularly in Reading comprehension skills, is a major problem for students who
are limited in their English-speaking abilities. Whether the lack of proficiency is due to being mainstreamed out of a Bilingual class too early, or lack of having an instructor who can give students support in their first language, is a debate that will continue to be waged. But, the bottom line is, there are non-native English speaking students who have diverse instructional needs. And, there are teachers who would like to address those needs, but are in a quandary as to how to be effective teachers to those students. What many teachers face in their classrooms are students who can read words, but have no idea what those words mean. With Bilingual students the teachers have an extra challenge of expanding these students’ vocabularies, reading abilities and comprehension skills, with a very limited English foundation to build upon.

This can leave teachers, like myself, feeling frustrated. As a monolingual teacher, this project was borne out of my own feelings of inadequacy regarding my English Language Learners (ELL). I felt I was not doing enough for them, especially in the area of reading. As a fourth grade teacher, I have tried many different strategies to help my students make meaning out of all the texts and literature books they are required to read. While immersing ELL students in English may help them learn words, I believe that something more is needed to help them academically.
Recommendation

This study focuses on strategies monolingual teachers can use to improve bilingual students' reading comprehension. I felt the need to create some sort of handbook for teachers, like myself, which would be a guide to planning classroom activities which focus solely on this academic area. The strategies I chose to highlight in this project are called Multiple Sign Systems. The lessons consist of students reading text and then engaging in various activities designed to facilitate a deeper understanding of the text. The strategies were brought to my attention during a class I took at California State University, San Bernardino. The first year I used them in my classroom I was not very consistent or particular about the way I employed them with the students. But, I did find them somewhat successful. The second year I used them I refined my approach based on the results I saw from the first year. This study focuses mainly on the latter year of my using these Multiple Sign Systems with my students. I think a benefit of these strategies is the social aspect of the activities. ELL students interact with their native-English speaking peers. Also, these strategies do not focus on right or wrong answers, but instead ask the students to make any connections they can to the texts.
As teachers, we know how easy it can be for a student to produce sounds and put those sounds together to form words. We also know that just because a student is making utterances, it doesn't mean they understand what they are reading. It is my hope that this project becomes a useful tool for monolingual teachers to use with their bilingual students.
CHAPTER TWO
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Introduction

In 1996, the following statistic was reported in an article in "The Elementary School Journal:"

"Eighty-five percent of Hispanic fourth and eighth graders read in English at a "basic" level or below. Over half score even below "basic," meaning they cannot demonstrate understanding of a text written at their grade level," (Goldenberg, 1996, p. 353).

This quote was entered here to illustrate the magnitude of the reading comprehension issue English Language Learners bring to classrooms every day. This literature review will focus on the positive effects that the use of several different multiple sign systems can have on reading comprehension for these students. Three groups of multiple sign systems will be reviewed. The first set involves written and discussion strategies. These are called Anomalies, Save the Last Word for Me and Say Something. These multiple sign systems explore how writing down and discussing words or concepts that are puzzling can help facilitate reading comprehension for ELL students.

The next group of multiple sign systems are visual or graphic exercises. Sketch to Stretch, Graffiti Board, literature logs, diagrams, charts, and webs show how graphics can be useful tools for making text
comprehensible. These graphics are all created by the students either during or after their reading of the text.

The final group of multiple sign systems involves artistic interpretation on the part of the students. Art, music and drama are sign systems which have been proven to facilitate reading comprehension for English Language Learners. Also included in the research is how these multiple sign systems provide comprehensible input for English Language Learners.

Social interaction is a component featured in all 12 of the multiple sign systems. The research will show the importance of grouping English Language Learners with their native-English speaking classmates during each of the multiple sign systems. Doing so will assist the ELL students with comprehending the text they're reading.

To begin this chapter, common reading comprehension strategies which have been proven unsuccessful, will be reviewed. This review will serve to contrast these reading strategies with the multiple sign systems.

Reading Strategies

Research has shown that the use of multiple sign systems for English Language Learners (ELL) will help facilitate their Reading comprehension. But, too often teachers only allow students to employ the written word or spoken word in attempts to facilitate deeper meanings in
literature. Research by Stephen Krashen and Tracy Terrell (1983) found that "...listening or reading) comprehension precedes speaking (or writing) abilities" (p. 20). Therefore, asking an ELL student to read a passage then write about it or discuss it with a partner in depth, may prove a frustrating and futile exercise because of the Lack of academic language the ELL student possesses. Before a student can produce that type of comprehensible output, the information supplied to the student must be comprehensible. Krashen advocates using visual aids to help facilitate meaning. Pictures, photographs, art, music or bodily movements are some ways which help ELL students comprehend text.

Yvonne and David Freeman (1998) concur with Krashen: "Acquisition (of a second language) takes time. Students should not be forced to produce too soon" (p. 413). The authors also say that when ELL students are involved in content-laden activities they need extra support to help them understand and should be allowed to use "...gestures, drawings, primary language, etc. to show they have understood" (p. 413). If using these techniques helps with the comprehension and acquisition of the English language, allowing students to use these same techniques to "discuss" text will supply a truer measure of their understanding than simply using pen and paper.
Yet, in a study involving teachers of fourth, fifth and sixth grade ELL students, written activities were favored by their teachers. Students were given vocabulary drills, or asked to copy from the board or a dictionary. These teachers tended to focus only on developing their students' vocabulary, grammar and spelling skills, rather than trying to engage the students in activities "...that might promote a deeper interpretation of the text" (Gertsen, 1999, p.45). The teachers' reasons for this type of instruction stemmed from their frustration about the discrepancy between their students' grade levels and their actual abilities. The pedantic exercises mentioned above were viewed as providing activities in which the students could feel successful. However, the unfortunate statistic is that the drills have "...consistently been linked with weak growth in vocabulary knowledge and has virtually no effect on comprehension" (Gertsen, 1999, p. 47).

Researchers Short, Kaufman, and Kahn, (2000) experienced similar results in their own classrooms. They found that assigning their students retellings, worksheets and comprehension questions failed to allow their students to experience a deeper meaning or what they termed a, "lived-through" understanding of the text. Upon this realization the authors employed literature discussion groups and written responses, but still their students were not gaining the deeper understandings the teachers were
looking for. The authors expanded the ways their students could "talk" about a book by introducing them to the multiple sign systems. According to their teachers, by using these new strategies, the students were able to:

"...create new ideas, and so their understandings of a book become more complex. They are not simply doing an activity or presentation from a book, but instead use these sign systems as tools for thinking" (p. 160).

The authors state they found their students experienced a "...wider range of connections" in their thoughts and feelings about the text. The personal connections the students make help foster a deeper understanding of the text. When students personally connect with what they're reading they are better able to understand circumstances or certain motivations of the characters.

These teachers were using isolated strategies to teach isolated skills to their students. In a book about teaching ELL students, Judith Wells Linford (1989) sheds some light as to why those strategies failed: "Children develop language best by observing and engaging in authentic communication - language used in situations that are meaningful and purposeful to participants" (p. 39).

This section has elaborated on a few common reading strategies some teachers of ELL students use with their students. Although these activities are used in a well meaning effort to help students, the research has shown
these strategies do very little to improve reading comprehension. The focus of the next section of this literature review will be descriptions of the multiple sign systems and how they're helpful in enhancing reading comprehension for ELL students.

Multiple Sign Systems

Research has shown that English Language Learners (ELL) will benefit from strategies that are not rooted in literal answers or interpretations. "Multiple Sign Systems" are the term Kathy Short, Gloria Kauffman and Leslie Kahn (2000) give to such strategies. In a recent article the trio defined multiple sign systems as: "...multiple ways of knowing - the ways in which humans share and make meaning, specifically through music, art, mathematics, drama, and language" (p. 160).

In an article which discussed learning approaches for linguistically diverse classrooms, authors Chamot and O’Malley (1996) list useful cognitive strategies for ELL students, who use the strategies to "...accomplish both language and content tasks" (p. 264). Included among the strategies list was imagery: students using graphic aids to help with their comprehension. The pair of authors do not use the term multiple sign systems to describe their strategies for improving reading comprehension. But, the graphic aids they describe to assist ELL students, mirror
the strategies described by Short, Kauffman and Kahn. Chamot and O'Malley further state in their article that:

"The new information should be presented in a meaningful context and with substantial support from extralinguistic cues such as visuals and demonstrations. New content should be scaffolded or presented with ample contextual supports such as realia, hands-on experiences, and visual or verbal cues for successful task performance" (p. 268).

One of the researchers of the article which describes the multiple sign systems conducted an experiment with her students. After reading a book to them, co-author Leslie Kahn issued an invitation to her class. She asked the students to think about what would help them contemplate the story before they discussed it as a class. The students scattered into a variety of multiple sign system activities: some created dramas of the story, others sketched images, while some students used glasses and water as musical instruments that relayed meaning for them. Kahn found that when the students discussed the story the next day their conversations involved opinions from different, broader perspectives and made deeper, more personal connections.

This section briefly introduced the multiple sign systems. The following sections will elaborate on the strategies in greater detail.
Sign Systems

The first of the multiple sign systems that will be reviewed are those that involve the students in writing down and discussing words, phrases, or concepts from their reading that are puzzling or interesting. One such sign system is called Anomalies. When reading text, students are asked to write down words or phrases which prove puzzling or surprising to them. According to Short, Harste, and Burke, (1996) when students are faced with information they don't understand, it fuels their desire to learn: "When we are faced with an anomaly, an unexpected occurrence or surprise, our attention turns to generating hypotheses to explain that anomaly," (p. 379). After writing down their anomalies, students are encouraged to discuss their thoughts, connections and tensions about the anomalies with their peers, in order to try and make sense of them.

Save the Last Word for Me is another sign system which has writing and discussing as its base. Students are encouraged to take an active part in their reading by finding points they agree or disagree with the author about. They are asked to put forth their own interpretations of the text by writing down any words or phrases which catch their attention. Students should also make notes about what it is they want to say about what they wrote down. When the students gather in groups to
share, one person reads the quote they wrote down, then other members share their thoughts and reactions to the piece. Finally, the person who read the quote first, gets to tell the group their thoughts about their quote.

Say Something is the final written and discussion multiple sign system activity that will be reviewed. Students work with partners to read texts in chunks. After the chunk is read each partner takes turn making comments about the text. Predictions, asking questions, sharing connections and experiences, are all encouraged when using this sign system. According to Short, Harste, and Burke, Say Something helps facilitate reading comprehension because it promotes reading strategies that proficient readers use: "As readers engage in Say Something, they are involved in the same active process of chunking a text, asking questions, finding connections, and making predictions that characterize the processes of proficient readers," (Short, et al, p. 512).

An example of a student using a writing sign system to make sense of text comes as an unintended aside to the Book Club Program. This program emphasizes reading, group discussion, and writing in a log. One student, however, took his log writing a step further when he chose to draw a picture of a scene from the book his group was reading at the time. Later, this same student again deviated (on his
own) from the regular log writing assignment when he wrote an acrostic poem in his log. His experiment lit a spark with his classmates as other students also wrote poems in their logs (Brock, 1997).

These sign systems, which have writing and discussion at their core, are fueled by the students' desire for either more information or a personal connection made to the text. Since students are not locked into looking for one particular correct answer, they are free to explore those parts of the text which have some kind of significant meaning for them.

Graphics

A key component in the multiple sign system strategies is the use of graphics, webs or diagrams. All of these are ways of visually organizing information. Susan Hughes (1994) uses the analogy of a spider's web to explain the purpose of webbing. Just as the threads of spiders' webs connect, students should find connections among themselves and the books they're reading. Short, Kauffman and Kahn, (1996) the authors of the book which explains the multiple sign systems, say that: "As we interact with people and texts, we search for patterns that connect our current experiences to past events, texts, and feelings" (p. 379).

Fran Claggett (1992) gives several reasons to use graphics with students. Without naming them, Claggett
alludes to diverse theories about how the mind works. The one commonality among all these theories is that the mind is complex and learning takes place in a multitude of different ways. Citing Carl Jung’s organizing principles of the brain/mind relationship, Claggett adapted Jung’s four primary ways of making sense of the world and named them: observe, analyze, imagine and feel. She claims that, "Through the use of graphics students can use all four functions as they interact with the books they are reading" (p. 5) Teaching students to think in metaphors is the first critical way graphics are helpful to students according to Claggett. Her second reason echoes what other researchers have said, graphics help students make connections. Third, graphics help students see the whole picture, instead of just parts of it. In working with her own students, Claggett found another benefit of the use of graphics. She noticed that her students retained information better from the books they had worked out graphically. Claggett also talks about something she calls the "evolving graphic" or graphic-in-progress, Instead of waiting until the end of a book or selection to create the graphic, it is created at the beginning of the assignment and information is added to it as the students read.

Karen Bromley (1991) articulates the relationship between graphics - webbing, mapping, organizers, diagrams -
and reading comprehension: "We know that learning occurs in an organized way, so it is not surprising that graphic material, such as webs used to illustrate the organization of ideas and information, aids the development of vocabulary, comprehension, and learning" (p. 3). In a different spin on graphics, teacher Gloria Kauffman asked her students to read silently in groups while seated around a piece of poster board or a large sheet of paper. As students made their way through the book they were encouraged to jot down words, sketch images and note personal connections. This activity, known as Graffiti Board, was an individual task, the group of students were not required to combine their efforts. The paper served to capture the students' thinking as they were in the process of reading the book. The paper then became a source of ideas for conversation and connections (Short, K., Kauffman, G., & Kahn, L., 2000).

Sketch to Stretch is similar to the Graffiti Board activity. When engaging in Sketch to Stretch, students are asked to draw something that is beyond their literal understanding of the text. Students are encouraged to draw their personal impressions, feelings, or connections to the story. These impressions are then shared in a group
situation where the objective is to help students gain new insights and meanings by sharing the sketches with their peers.

When the students were queried about how they felt about graphically responding to literature, they answered that:

"...these responses allowed them to express their feelings, to try out ideas they had in their minds about the book, to learn more about the book, to understand how it felt to live during that period, to make more connections, and to experience the emotions of children in the story. They stated they could try out ideas they had in their minds, and that helped them talk more deeply about the book when they met for discussion," (Short, Kauffman & Kahn, 2000, p. 162).

The graphics and webbing activities associated with this set of multiple sign systems is a way for students to organize their thought processes. These activities, and the ones following in the next section, provide a way for students to show what they’re thinking when their academic language is not sufficient for them to verbalize their thoughts.

Artistic Interpretation

In their article about multiple sign systems, Short, Kauffman and Kahn emphasized the need for the students to pull together their understandings by presenting their findings to the class in a culminating oral activity or presentation. In most cases, the presentations fell into
the realm of alternative sign systems. Students used drama, art, charts and music to share what they learned with their peers.

A recent article in The California Reader supports the research of Short, Kauffman and Kahn. Using the Book Club program in her classroom, fifth-grade teacher Laura Pardo combined Social Studies and Literature to teach a unit on the Civil War. Her students worked in groups to research and write a report about their particular topic. Each group was also responsible for sharing their information with the rest of the class. "Students chose such venues as skits and plays to share some of the highlights of their learning," (Brock, C. & Moore, D., 2001, p. 22).

In an article that describes the visual side of reading comprehension, author Jeffrey Wilhelm (1995) expands on the semiotic theory first put forth by Charles Pierce. Wilhelm uses the term artistic sign systems to explain that:

"...if a subject does not construct a rich mental model or scene in her mind, then reading, thinking, or problem-solving cannot occur. Without a visual model, there will be nothing to think with, and nothing to think about. And if iconic response is prerequisite to other forms of response, then reluctant readers might benefit from learning to project concrete, iconic representations of stories such as those achieved through activities such as drama and visual art" (p. 471).
Using students in his classroom as research subjects, Wilhelm introduced picture-mapping to his class. In this activity, students were asked to visually represent, by drawing, the key details of the text they were reading. The other component of this technique consisted of the students graphically showing how the key ideas related to one another. And, just as Fran Claggett discovered when her students used webs to represent what they had read, Wilhelm also found that this visualization technique helped his students remember the stories they had read.

Drama is another way students can make meaning and connections from what they read using the multiple sign systems. Authors Bill Harp and Jo Ann Brewer (1991) also contend that drama helps students retain what they’ve read. They also say drama is a good way for teachers to monitor if students have understood what they’ve read. Reader’s Theater is an off shoot of drama which is less involved than putting on a play. Children use scripts to read their part of the play. The emphasis is on expression and making the audience see the play because of that expression. In the book Learning With Readers Theatre, the authors state that this form of drama expands students skills with language. It is also less imposing to some students because they are able to use a script and they don’t have to memorize lines and remember where to stand for each
scene. These authors also cite the connections children make between what they are learning and what they already know, when engaging in Readers Theatre (Dixon, N., Davies, A., & Politano, C., 1996).

These activities allow the students to show their understanding of the text through an artistic representation. Taking what they've read about out of one medium, a book, and putting it into another, a play, Reader's Theater, is a powerful way to show a deep grasp of text.

Comprehensible Input

Pauline Gibbons might say the student who wrote the acrostic poem, in the earlier example of a student using writing as a multiple sign system, was able to make sense of the text he was reading, and produce that poem because his language was extended. In other words, the student knew most of the language, but some of it was beyond what was comprehensible for the child on his own. According to Gibbons, giving ELL students new language is important. It is equally important to give students a way to make that new, or extended language, comprehensible. According to Gibbons this can be done in a variety of ways:

"...diagrams, charts, graphs and illustrations, or through drama or mime activities" (Gibbons, 1991, pp. 17 & 18).

These multiple sign systems help the ELL students make
sense of new language. Students are allowed ways to
demonstrate their understanding of the words without being
compelled to come up with specific terms.

Christian J. Faltis expands on this idea. Coining the
term comprehensible invite, Faltis (1997) also suggests
giving the ELL students language that is new to them. The
new language invites the students to creatively interact to
construct meaning. The teacher has to support the student’s
interactions with opportunities for the student to
construct diagrams, visuals, quick writes and oral
discourse. The oral discourse can come in the form of such
activities as Anomalies, Say Something or Save the Last
Word for Me. These multiple sign systems allow the ELL
students to express confusion or ignorance of a word or
phrase in a supportive group situation.

Gibbons and Faltis’ comments mirror that of Lev
Vygotsky’s idea of the Zone of Proximal Development. This
theory emphasizes, "...social interaction and the use of
language in mediating cognitive development and learning" (Dixon-Krauss, 1995, p. 46). According to Dixon-Krauss’
research, the Zone of Proximal development is:

"...each child’s potential for development beyond
his or her current level of independent
functioning. According to Vygotsky, learning
occurs as the child gradually internalizes higher
level thought processes that are activated
through social interaction with an adult or in
collaboration with capable peers" (Dixon-Krauss,
1995, p. 46).
Social Interaction

The activities associated with multiple sign systems lend themselves very nicely to students working in groups. English Language Learners benefit from the support of their native-English speaking peers.

Claude Goldenberg (1996) suggests that:

"...teachers' inordinate emphasis on whole-class instruction and individual seat-work severely limits these students' opportunities to talk, ask and answer questions, read aloud, and otherwise actively engage in learning, language and content" (p. 354).

In the Journal of Reading Behavior, Sherry L. Guice (1995) states: "The interpretation of text becomes, under symbolic interactionism, a social act, an interpretive act, shaped by interactions among readers," (p. 381). In a study of fifth-graders reading poetry, it was found that the groups the students were a part of functioned as "community support groups." The students gave writing and revising suggestions, to each other, as well as helped clarify meanings for one another.

In another study which cited Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, first and second-grade students were paired to read story books. The study cited three particular instances of the students helping one another comprehend the texts. In the first example, students reading a difficult book on water safety engaged in an ongoing discussion throughout the reading of the
book. In the second example, one student instructed another student to "look at the pictures" to find the part they liked the best. In the third example, the partners used a question and answer activity to clarify parts of the book (Dixon-Krauss, 1995).

In an article which describes language learning as both a declarative and procedural process, authors Chamot and O'Malley (1996) assert that it is necessary for second language learners to:

"...interact orally and in writing with more proficient age peers as well as with the teacher so they can immediately apply understanding of the language modeled and sociolinguistic or strategic skills to accomplish important goals" (p. 263).

The authors also state that when students work together they use dialogue which helps them to internalize mental processes. Also, citing Vygotsky, the article states:

"...overt dialogue is an important component of cooperative learning and strategic thinking. As students describe their strategic mental processes to other students, they gain control over and internalize effective learning procedures" (p. 269).

In her book which discusses effective uses of webbing on reading comprehension, Karen Bromley (1991) points out the social benefits of using graphics. She contends that when students are encouraged to create webs as a group,
they use "...language in authentic ways to share and learn from one another, and in so doing they build their literacy" (p. 4).

In his article on semiotic, or visual art procedures to assist in reading comprehension, Jeffrey Wilhelm (1995) describes how the artistic activities enhanced small group work in his classroom. "The use of artistic response as a springboard for literary discussions decentered the teacher as the authority, and foreground the students as conversant and generators of discourse" (p. 497). He also said his students were not shy about sharing their artwork because they were confident their vision would not be labeled incorrect.

An article in the journal "Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc." (TESOL), stated a balanced classroom environment for English Language Learners must incorporate "collaboration and interaction among classroom participants," (Cole, R., Raffier, L., Rogan, P., & Schleicher, L., 1998, p. 558). These authors also cite Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development to explain the benefit of social interaction on reading comprehension: "...social interaction is a force through which people share intelligence, skills, knowledge, and understanding...Interaction can and should involve members
of the class and not be limited to engagement with the teacher" (p. 559).

Student interaction with the teacher is the center of a study which focuses on the effects of instructional conversations on English Language Learners. Authors William Saunders and Claude Goldenberg (1999) adapted the Experience-Text-Relationship (ETR) approach in work with ELL learners and literature units. The pair explain the purpose of the instructional conversations:

"Through ongoing discussions (instructional conversations)...the teacher helps students study the story in relation to their own experiences and a central theme. Discussions provide a social opportunity for students and teacher to collaboratively build more elaborate and sophisticated understandings" (p. 281).

The instructional conversations were paired with literature logs. Students were asked to write about their personal experiences in their logs and then, as a group, meet with the teacher to converse about what they wrote. One of the conclusions from the study was that teachers of ELL students should use "...both instructional conversations and literature logs because the combined effect on understanding a story's theme is stronger than the effect of either one individually" (pp. 295 & 296).

In some classrooms it is traditional to group students according to their abilities. But, research done by Robert Slavin concluded that grouping students according to their
reading abilities does not enhance their academic achievement, (Harp & Brewer). The alternative to ability grouping is flexible grouping.

Flexible groups are temporary, vary in size and number and are formed to engage in specific tasks. Cooperative Learning Groups are a form of flexible grouping. In these groups social skills are a component of the formation of groups. Along with the specified task, these groups also focus on interpersonal skills Individual accountability is also required. In order for the group to be successful all members must do their parts (Harp, et al).

Conclusion

The research cited has shown multiple sign systems to be an effective alternative for English Language Learners to comprehend text. These activities can take the place of rote drills and lessons that only emphasize grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. The various ways students can express their thoughts when using the multiple sign systems, has been shown to be an effective tool to facilitate deeper understanding and allow students to make more personal connections to text. Graphs, drama, webs, diagrams, and flexible grouping are helpful ways students can make connections between the literature and their lives.
English Language Learners also benefit greatly by social interaction between themselves, their peers and teachers. ELL students can thrive in a classroom setting which does not emphasize literal answers when reading text. The sharing of thoughts and connections among the students allows ELL students to hear and use language in authentic situations with their English-speaking peers.

This literature review gave broad definitions of the multiple sign systems. The following chapter will give specific examples of how some of the sign systems were used in a fourth grade elementary school classroom. The chapter will be laced with student work. A narrative by the teacher will guide the reader through the chapter.
CHAPTER THREE
MULTIPLE SIGN SYSTEMS

Introduction

Using multiple sign systems in my own fourth-grade classroom has given me some insight into how to practically apply this approach in a classroom. I am finding it successful with small reading groups. All except two groups have five children in them. The other groups have four and three students in them respectively. Keeping the group's numbers limited allows time for each student to fully explore their particular sign system.

Using some of the sign systems written about in the book, Creating Classrooms for Authors and Inquirers, I gave each group a certain sign system. My small groups rotate through five activities during their small group reading time. One of the activities is the group reading with the teacher. The other four activities are accomplished by the group, independent of the teacher.

Arranging the Groups

Before the multiple sign systems are used in small group situations, they should first be introduced to the class as a whole. Having the students use them with the stories from their Reading textbook can be a good place to start. Because students are used to summarizing the
When the students are ready to form their small Reading groups, they should be arranged heterogeneously. The purpose of these sign systems is not to group students together who share the same reading level, but rather to help students hone their comprehension skills. Therefore, leveled reading books should not be used in this endeavor. I recommend using literature books. Because the groups are composed of students with different reading abilities, those students who have difficulty with the text are supported by those students and also by the teacher. I always have the members of the group read the book out loud when reading with me, so if someone needs help with a word, they get it. A by-product of these activities is that students get instruction on strategies to help them figure out a word when they’re doing their reading activity with the teacher. We practice using context clues, chunking the word, looking for little, familiar words within the word and using picture support. For those students who are already good readers, reviewing these strategies reinforces the good reading habits they have already internalized. During the independent activities, the students re-read the part of the book they read when they met with me. When the
group is engaging in their sign system, one member reads the passage out loud that the group is supposed to concentrate on at that time. If a member wants to pass on reading out loud at this time, it is okay. Once a book is finished the groups should not remain static.

If not reading ability, what then, should be the motivating factor behind the arrangement of the multiple sign system groups? The groups can simply just be arranged at random. Or, the reading interests of the students can be taken into account, as well as the abilities of the students to work together. Or, the groups can be turned into cooperative reading groups. One function of such a group should be to teach social skills. In these groups each student has a job to do. Strategies for doing that job, maintaining quiet, keeping the group on task, are brainstormed by the class.

Small groups are a wonderful venue for using the multiple sign systems. However, before students are placed in groups they must see a model of how the sign systems are supposed to work. Students must also be taught how to run their small groups independently of the teacher.

The following pages will describe the particular sign systems in relation to how they were used in small groups in a fourth grade classroom and how the multiple sign
systems helped English Language Learners' comprehension of the stories they were reading.

Independent Activities

An independent activity that is key to each sign system is for the group to read a portion of their book and then engage in their sign system. One of the groups is reading *The Whipping Boy*. The sign system this group engaged in is called Anomalies. This activity calls for students to read a chunk of the material and then write down a word, phrase or quote that is new to them or doesn’t make sense. The students record their anomalies in notebooks that are only to be used for Reading groups. They then take turns discussing their Anomalies as a group.

One of the activities I do with the students besides reading with them, is to review their anomalies, to hear what they’re talking about and guide their understanding, if necessary. I am finding that most of the students use anomalies to clarify things they don’t understand. If they were able to clarify the word or issue for themselves, I’ll ask them to tell me how they did it. And then, we’ll discuss how what that can be used to make meaning for whatever they’re reading. Then, I’ll add that eventually they’ll internalize the process and will be doing it for themselves without even thinking about it.
I’m sensing these particular students are getting very comfortable with their particular sign system. One day they were grouped around my desk. As I was returning to my seat to meet with them, I heard them discussing the book. One boy was confused about which character in the first chapter refused to cry. One of the English Language Learners was able to clarify her classmate’s confusion in a very clear way. She used language from the book and also used the word DEFIANT - a new word to her - to describe the character.

It’s obvious this ELL student felt confident and comfortable giving that answer. She’s also building her vocabulary through the dialogues that come about because of Anomalies. According to the authors of the book which outline the multiple sign systems, Anomalies, or any unexpected occurrences or surprises, causes us to focus our energies on coming up with explanations for those anomalies. The tension that comes from attempting to make sense of new learning is what keeps us alert. Students on the alert, or lookout, for new information are ready to undertake the task of making that information comprehensible.

Another group is reading the short story Blackberries in the Dark. It’s about a little boy who is facing his first summer at his grandparents home after his grandfather
has died. This group is assigned an activity called Sketch to Stretch.

The focus of this sign system is for students to draw their impressions of the chunk of the story they’ve just read. The emphasis here is that the students draw impressions of the story and not an illustration of what they’ve just read. This takes some getting used to for the students. They have been trained from a very young age to draw something from the story. Examples of someone drawing their impressions or connections to a story are very helpful in this situation.

The students reading Blackberries... are still struggling with this concept. But, they are slowly making those personal connections. The story begins with the young boy flying on an airplane to get to his grandmother’s house. All of the group members drew an airplane in their notebooks. When they met with me a couple of them had personal accounts to share with the group. One student recalled flying in a small airplane where she was able to actually take the controls. Another student made a much more personal connection when she told the group that her grandmother was probably going to die very soon. This girl, usually not very articulate, was able to describe, in detail, how her family takes care of her grandmother. She could also relate her sadness about her grandmother’s
condition and ultimate demise to the boy's sadness at losing his grandfather.

About two weeks after this exchange, the group read about the grandmother showing the boy an antique doll she had been saving to give away if she ever had a granddaughter. After the students read this section they all drew their grandmother's giving them a doll. The exception was the one boy in the group, who drew his grandfather giving him an old car. The drawings were very simple, not much detail at all. But, when the group began discussing their drawings, they elaborated on them very eloquently. I am finding that as time goes on this group is getting very good at self-reflection and relating this story to their own lives.

The appeal of this multiple sign system is that the students turn one medium, reading, into another medium, drawing. The authors term this recasting "transmediation." By drawing the students should come up with meanings that are not literal, but give them deeper meanings and insights.

My third Reading group is engaging in Say Something with the book A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court. The guidelines for this sign system are much like the previous two. The students read a chunk of the story and then "say something" about what they've just read. I use
the variation of Say Something and have the students write down what it is they want to talk about. I’ve asked them to write down the word or phrase they want to talk about as well as what they want to say about it, or why they wrote it down. The purpose for this is twofold. First, it helps the students remember what they want to talk about, and secondly, it gives me a written record to look at. Nothing is off limits. The students can comment on something that was funny to them, something they didn’t understand, something they relate to their own lives, make predictions, or ask questions.

This technique led to a very insightful discussion of what a crowbar was. Crowbar was a word one of the group members wanted to "say something" about. The students were able to determine how the term was being used in the book by looking at the context clues. I wanted to push their understanding further and connect this learning with previous lessons the class had engaged in about words having more than one meaning. So, I asked them what people use crowbars for today. After some guessing and a little prodding from me, the students came up with the information that crowbars are used on the tires of cars. But, they didn’t have a clue as to what that thing on the tire was that the crowbar was supposed to pry loose. So, since my portable classroom is located right next to a parking lot,
our group took a trip outside (only do this if there's another teacher in the room) to look at cars. Some of the students were then able to come up with the word hubcap. And the other students were able to add that word to their vocabulary.

Authors Short, Harste and Burke stress that Say Something highlights the social nature of our language. Their point is that language learning can be greatly facilitated through social interaction.

The fourth group is reading The Great Cheese Conspiracy, a fanciful story about mice who live in a movie theater. The group's sign system is Graffiti Board. After they read a chunk of the text, they can draw or write about what the text made them think of. Like Sketch to Stretch, what the students do is not supposed to be a retelling of what they just read. One student in this group has a firm grasp on what is supposed to be done. The others are still struggling with connections. But, this one student draws and writes over an entire notebook page after reading. Her graffiti shows that she is very good at relating to the characters in the story, even though they're mice.

When we come together for reading and discussion the conversations are not as fulfilling as I'd like them to be. So, I've started to do my own Graffiti Board to give the students and idea of what they can reflect upon. Graffiti
Board is actually a two-part process. After the students share their graffiti with one another they’re supposed to connect their reflections in the form of a web, chart or diagram. I have not had the students do this part, yet. I was waiting for them to get a bit more skilled at doing the graffiti. But, perhaps if I introduce the second half, it will help them make more connections and facilitate our conversations about the book.

Teacher Gloria Kaufman says the graffiti board captures her student’s thoughts while they are in the process of thinking and working through the text. It’s important that when engaging in this sign system, the students must know they can pursue their own interpretations and connections; that there is no right or wrong answer.

The fifth group is exploring a sign system called Save the Last Word for Me. They are reading a Sherlock Holmes mystery, *The Hound of the Baskerville*. The point of this sign system is for the reader to be active and discuss items they agree or disagree with the author about. This book lends itself very nicely to that end because it is a detective story.

The procedure for this activity is for the students to write down portions of the text, words or phrases that stand out for them. They should also jot down what it is
they wish to say about the quote. It is also helpful if the students write down the page number of the segment. Prior to discussing the segments, students should rank them in order from the most important to the least important according to their desire to discuss them. The students take turns reading their choices from the story. The other students then comment on it. The student who read is the last person to verbally react to the quote.

My reading group hasn’t connected too personally with this story, although that is one goal of this sign system. But, I think it’s because of the plot and setting of the story, which involves the world’s most famous detective solving a mystery allegedly involving a gigantic hound. The students are honing their predicting and deducting skills. They are also very opinionated as to the main character’s suppositions and conjectures. During our discussions they are getting very good at defending their conclusions from clues from the text.

All of these multiple sign systems can be extended by the use of webs after the students have finished reading their books. Students can put the key points of their discussions into graphic representations. Using poster board or drawing paper, one of the group members is in charge of writing. The name of the book goes either at the top or middle of the paper. Then, the group members recount
their thoughts and the scribe writes these down either under or around the title. Related items are placed together. When this is completed the group decides which item they want to discuss at their next meeting. Plans should be made as to how the group will prepare for that discussion. At every subsequent meeting the web is placed in the middle of the group so new ideas can be added. When the group has finished, they can create a final web which shows how their thinking has changed. This latest web can be used to share with the rest of the class as a culminating activity for that book.

Culminating Activities
An important component of the multiple sign systems is that the group composes some sort of activity or graphic representation to share with the other groups after they've completed the book. One idea that has already been talked about is webbing, another idea is drama.

One year a group of my students were researching key figures in the Civil Rights Movement. One group chose to act out Rosa Parks' refusal to give up her seat on the bus. Another group acted out key moments from the life of Malcolm X. Reader's Theater is another form of drama. This can be a little less intimidating for students because they're reading from scripts. With teaching, students will be able to create their own Reader's Theater scripts. With
the use of an overhead the whole class can participate in turning a short story into a script. There are also resource books filled with Reader's Theater scripts that the students could use as models.

The key component that has made the use of multiple sign systems an asset in my classroom is the social aspect, the peer discussions. Students were not afraid to express their ignorance or curiosity about words, or concepts they were reading about. As the weeks progressed the students began making more and more personal connections to the text. If a student had had a similar experience as a character, that experience helped the student to understand the character better.

The multiple sign systems have been presented here as a way for teachers of English Language Learners to help foster reading comprehension. This is in no way an exhaustive list of strategies, just some that this author has used in her own classroom.
CHAPTER FOUR

ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This chapter will serve to outline some ways students who engage in the multiple sign systems can show their understanding and comprehension of texts, in other words, how they can be assessed. The chapter will begin with a brief description of different assessments and then move to an overview of the typical ways students are assessed: selected-response and constructed-response tests. The crux of the chapter will focus on Performance Assessments and how they can be a reliable source for assessing students who engage in the multiple sign systems. The key component of Performance Assessment is, that like the multiple sign systems, it allows students to use their personal connections to the text to construct meaningful products.

What is Assessment

A simple definition of assessment is: students demonstrating their knowledge of concepts. Assessing students is a necessary part of any teacher’s job. This tool allows the instructor to inform their curriculum and lesson planning. It seems the preferred way students are asked to show their knowledge is by the use of paper and pencil tests. One such test is the Student Achievement Test
or SAT exams. In California, all students, regardless of their native language, are required to take them. Within their own classrooms, teachers either design or use pre-made tests, which, like the SAT’s, only allow for one correct answer. But, these types of tests merely call for the student to regurgitate facts and figures from various lessons. These instruments do not allow students to use their knowledge and apply it to tasks or situations of their own making. This type of test is a double-edged sword for English Language Learners because of the language barrier. Some ELL students may have problems understanding the academic language in which the tests are written. There is no collaborating with one’s peers during these examinations, so ELL students are left to construct meaning for themselves without support.

Certainly, with some subjects, such as Math and Science, there may be only one right answer. But, if a teacher is going to use the multiple sign systems to allow their students to negotiate text, it would be absurd to then give students a paper and pencil assessment. When assessing reading comprehension, there are different methods that can he used to determine student understanding, which go hand in hand with the multiple sign systems. And these are called performance-based assessments. They are an almost natural extension of the
multiple sign systems because they allow the students to continue to use their own connections and interpretations to display and articulate what they learned from the text. Performance-based assessments will be discussed in depth later in this chapter. Below, is a brief description of the commonly used paper and pencil assessments and the reasons why these tests hold the least academic support for ELL students.

Response Tests

Selected-response tests consist of students choosing the correct answer from a provided list. The list can be in the form of binary or multiple binary-choice items. These tests take the forms of true/false assessments, or tests where a list of answers are given. Matching tests, in which correct responses must be matched between column A and B also fall into the category of selected-response tests. These kinds of tests typically do not assess the higher-order thinking skills of students. They simply ask the student to recognize a correct response. The English Language Learner who may be able to verbally or artistically give a correct response, may not recognize the right written answer because of the academic language the correct response may be couched in (Popham, J., 1999).

Constructed-response tests consist of short answer and essay test questions. Short answer tests can take the form
of an incomplete sentence with one or two blank spaces which must be filled in with a word or words by the student. The essay question is an assessment in which students must construct a response to a prompt from the teacher. This type of test assesses higher-order thinking skills because it requires the students to construct the answers on their own, without the benefit of a list of choices. Yet again, the ELL students may have problems producing the academic language necessary to score well on such tests (Popham, J., 1999).

Both selected- and constructed-response tests are widely used with all kinds of students in all kinds of classrooms. These tests are certainly an adequate measure of student knowledge. But, if a teacher has allowed the students to use the multiple measure sign systems to negotiate text, then selected- and constructed-response tests are not the measure which should be used to assess students. The multiple sign systems allow teachers to give their students the freedom to explore a text with little restrictions. When students are engaged in the multiple sign systems the emphasis is not on literal recollection of the text, but on the personal connections the students can make with the text. The response tests do not make allowances for varied interpretations of a text. They have a very narrow focus. These tests ask for specific answers.
Therefore, it doesn’t make sense to then assess students with response tests, who have been using the multiple sign systems when reading text. Performance-based assessments provide the students with latitude to construct a culminating product which shows their understanding of the text.

Performance-Based Assessments

According to James McMillan, a "...performance-based assessment is one in which the teacher observes and makes a judgment about the student’s demonstration of a skill or competency in creating a product, constructing a response, or making a presentation" (2001, p. 196). McMillan says performance-based is really short for performance and product-based assessment because students must produce their own work. He also says that performance based and performance assessment are synonymous. Both refer to the student outcome including presentations or products.

Popham refers to performance assessments as an approach to measuring a student’s status based on the way that the student completes a specified task" (1999, p. 157). In the book, Authentic Assessment for English Language Learners, the authors define performance assessment as: "...any form of assessment in which the student constructs a response orally or in writing" (O’Malley and Valdez Pierce, 1996, p. 4). These authors
list six merits of performance assessments for children, especially English Language Learners. The first merit is that performance-based assessments call for a constructed response from the student, which can take the form of a product or a performance. Next, in order to construct their responses students must use higher-order thinking skills. Further, the tasks are authentic and have meaning for the students as they are couched in the real world connections the students have made through the use of the multiple sign systems. This type of assessment makes it necessary for students to integrate their language skills and at times may call for the students to integrate some knowledge and skills they've learned in other content areas. Students are not expected to come up with a correct answer and in many cases, teachers assess the process the students used to create their final products. And, finally, rather than performance assessments focusing on the wide range of student knowledge, it provides information on skills the students have mastered (O'Malley, Valdez Pierce, 1996).

Popham cites three reasons why performance-based assessments are becoming more popular in our classrooms. He states there is a growing dissatisfaction with selected and constructed-response tests due to the fact that students are only required to select a correct response. Cognitive psychologists are advocating the use of performance
assessment in classrooms. They feel that students' knowledge of procedures should be assessed. They say that multiple choice and short answer tests are not the best way to assess that type of knowledge. And, finally, the negative impact state testing has on instructional practices and assessments in the classroom is a factor which is influencing the use of assessment tests in classrooms. Popham fears that teachers will teach to the test, and thus assess their students with paper and pencil tests. This will lead to an opposing purpose of performance-based assessments which is to judge the students on the mastery of their skills rather than on the breadth of their knowledge (Popham, 1999).

Strengths and Limitations

According to McMillan, one of the major benefits of this type of assessment is that the teacher must interact with the students as they go through the process of constructing their performance or product. And, when teachers grade not only the finished product, but the student's progress in getting to their final goal, there lies multiple opportunities for student assessment. Teachers can assess the reasoning processes demonstrated by the students. Also, because students are using skills during performance assessments rather than regurgitating memorized information, those skills can be transferred to
other content areas as well as real life. Students are more engaged in this type of assessment than in the typical paper and pencil tests (2001). I have seen students who do not perform well on standard tests come alive during a performance-based assessment using music.

McMillan also writes about three limitations of performance assessments. The first is reliability. He contends that this type of test is subject to measurement error. This refers to the judgments teachers must make about the performances or products of their students. He says there will be variations because of teacher bias. Although bias can be accounted for by using criteria and scoring rubrics, he still believes that reliability will be lower than with standard tests. Time is another issue which limits the use of performance-based assessments. First students must be given time to negotiate the text using the multiple sign systems, then students must be given adequate time to construct and then deliver their performance or product. And this leads to McMillan’s final limitation: not having many student samples to base grades upon (2001).

Despite the limits of performance-based assessments, they are a type of assessment that, with everything taken into consideration, can help a teacher get a clear picture of a student’s skills. And for students who first language
is not English, it can help them articulate what they know. They allow students to demonstrate their comprehension in creative ways.

Types of Assessments

Teachers and researchers, Kathy Short, Gloria Kaufman and Leslie Kahn, insist their students engage in some type of performance assessment activity to pull together the knowledge, connections and information gained from reading texts and using the multiple sign systems. Many of these activities that students engage in for a performance assessment turn out to be multiple sign systems. Leslie Kahn’s students used drama to understand a Holocaust book. Before the students performed their plays they had to create story boards (2000). Other students have used singing, or playing musical instruments to demonstrate their knowledge, according to McMillan. In my own classroom, students have used their charts, webs and pictures from Sketch to Stretch or Graffiti Board to create a montage of the story they read. Students have used music by Beethoven, or created pen and ink drawings as a performance assessment. Teachers have found that while the multiple sign systems allow students make a wide range of connections, the performance assessments help the students to narrow their focus of the issues derived from their
reading of the text as they reflect on those connections when coming up with a task to create for their performance-based assessment.

Conclusion

Assessment plays a major role in the use of multiple sign systems to assist in reading comprehension of English Language Learners. Performance-based assessments, rather than selected or constructed-response tests, are the better choice to use with the sign systems. Performance-based assessments do not pigeon-hole the ELL student into using language they may not yet be comfortable with. Like the multiple sign systems, performance-based assessments let the students make meanings about text without having to worry about delivering the one correct answer. These types of assessments allow the students to use art, music, drama, webs, charts, pictures, drawings, and several other modes that are also part of the multiple sign systems.
CHAPTER FIVE
PROJECT OVERVIEW

This project has shown the usefulness of using multiple sign systems to foster reading comprehension in English Language learners. Personal interpretations on the part of the readers are the key element of the multiple sign systems. This personal interpretation is encouraged through the use of music, art, drama, webs, diagrams, charts and social interaction within the classroom. Using multiple sign systems takes the pressure off the ELL to come up with the one right answer. Activities such as Anomalies, Say Something and Save the Last Word for Me, encourage the English Language student to attend to the words, thoughts and concepts from the text which puzzle them, without embarrassment.

The population of students whose first language is not English, is a rising number in California's schools. These multiple sign system activities are ways monolingual teachers can improve reading comprehension for those students.
APPENDIX

STUDENT EXAMPLES
STUDENT EXAMPLES

The following pages will show or discuss student examples of the multiple sign systems. The examples have been placed in the Assessment chapter even though most were executed during the course of reading a text as opposed to being a culminating project. As was shown in this chapter, the use of multiple sign systems allows students to be assessed throughout the entire process of negotiating text.
ANOMALIES

The following two pages show Anomalies written by two English Language Learners for the book, *The Whipping Boy*. Having students record their Anomalies in notebooks allows the teacher to review them during free time. The lists are wonderful places to start to teach mini-lessons on figuring out words from context clues.

The reading comprehension benefit for ELL students who engage in this multiple sign system, is that they attend to that which they do not understand about the text. Not understanding causes tension for the reader, who then generates predictions to try to resolve the tension.
powder wings p.1
spit ink p.1
blazed p.2
orphans p.2
bowl p.4
unhurt p.4
oblige p.6
Tumble p.6
marble vault p.7
gallows p.7
beached p.8
stonish p.8
scrawled p.8
swirled p.8
outhouse p.8
cutwater p.8
RAFFIA p.9
rattled p.9
murderer p.12
chuckled p.12
Dr. milled p.13
thimbleful p.14
aw p.14
Crisis p.15
stable p.15
tattered p.15
pines p.15
Rafters p.18
Vagabonds p.18
Couthroad p.18
scribbled p.19
Hawks p.19
owl p.19
held your nose p.19
a mien p.19
coital p.19
Mayest p.19
wrinkled p.19
Captors p.19
Swelled p.19
Fowl p.19

56
46. Outsketched Beasty
45. Called grimly
44. High-shipping advancing snowful
43. Faintest resentment
50. Ventured embankment billowing jumble sandpiles
53. Kettle lurched motioned
54. Possessed
51. Mudlarking
52. Firecracker embankment eyesight enamelled
57. Trash lightfooted flummores
56. Greefully horsewhip quill-scratchin ransom ink scheme
SAVE THE LAST WORD FOR ME

The multiple sign system Save the Last Word for Me, is a window into the thought processes of the students. Besides writing down the phrase they wish to discuss with the group, the student is also required to write down what they want to say about the phrase. The examples are from the Sherlock Holmes story, The Hound of the Baskervilles.

Realizing that their native English speaking peers do not always understand what they read, is a benefit ELL students gain from engaging in this multiple sign system. Because all of the students in the group are voicing their own interpretations of the text and relating it to their personal experiences, the ELL students learn to value their experiences and bring those moments to their reading of the text, thereby broadening their comprehension.
Chapter 2.

I think the Sir Charles
is making a deal,
I want to know
what kind of deal he was
willing to do.

I think that a woman
cut out the letter
from a newspaper.

Holmes asked that the
writing was cut from a
newspaper called London
times.

How did Holmes know
that the news was from
London times?
Did he know everything
from the times?

Very clever of you, Mr. Holmes.
Why did Sir Henry say that
he is clever? Because he is
a dealer.
Chapter 2

48. Well, what do you make of it, Holmes?

49. I think that Sir Charles was waiting for someone because they probably
   to talk. I wrote about it because it
   seemed interesting.

50. I think the letter was from a woman. I think that because
   all the men have had action.

51. For some reason, Watson said
   Holmes when he was looking at
   the newspaper. But how did he
   say it?

52. "Very clever of you, Mr. Holmes."

53. Why did Sir Henry say Holmes
   was clever?

54. Why was one of the boats gone
   and how took it.
SAY SOMETHING

In these next two examples, students used Say Something to clear up questions they had about the text, a book called, A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur’s Court. These questions were answered by other members of the group, or in some cases, by the teacher. Learning about the words CROWBAR and HUBCAP, written about in Chapter Three, were from a discussion by this particular group.

The comprehension value for ELL comes in the form of the social nature of this multiple sign system. The dialogues the students engage in, coupled with, relating personal experiences to the text, help second-language learners foster a deeper understanding of what they have been reading.
3-6-0
1. Squires - present - worker
2. Launcelot - name
3. Industries - factories
4. Various - place
5. Civilisation - crime
6. Stringing - connecting wires
7. Walking - various walking
8. Opportunity - a chance
9. Overwhelmed - excitement
10. Flat - match, so it would make fire
11. Lavish -
12. Quest - Adventure

say something pg 55-57
GRAFFITI BOARD

It’s clear from these next two examples that even though the book, The Great Cheese Conspiracy, is about rats who live in a movie theater, the students were making personal connections, which helped foster their understanding of the story.

When using Graffiti Board, the English Language Learner writes or draws their observations and reflections. They do not have to worry about recreating a certain answer. That, along with interacting with their peers through sharing and dialoging, helps foster comprehension.
Chapters 5 and 4

It makes me think about the time I got
I think popcorn

They are in a trash can

Dream
This remind me when I watched that movie Edward Sisser hands
Sketch to Stretch is a multiple sign system which allows students to use graphic representations to enhance their reading comprehension. This is a powerful tool for students, especially English Language Learners, who may lack the academic language to express themselves clearly. The following examples are from the story, Blackberries in the Dark.

By taking the information from the written word, and expressing it through art, the English Language Learner generates new knowledge.
LITERATURE LOGS

Literature logs are designed for students to write whatever they want about a book, these students chose to write summaries for the books, *Eagles, Lions of the Sky* and *Wild Cats*!

The entries in these logs can take any form - webs, charts, quotes or reflections. Literature logs are a way for English Language Learners to organize their thoughts about a story, which in turn, fosters comprehension.
This lesson.

Eagles are popular. The Bald Eagle is our national bird. The Bald Eagle is a fierce hunter. Some eagles can fly really fast, but others can't. Eagles have one thing in common, and that is we hunters. Eagles are kings of the skies. There are many kinds of eagles called a Bald Eagle, Golden Eagle, Harrier, Marsh Eagle, White-tailed Sea Eagle, Snipe, Bald Eagle, Snipe, and more. Eagles eat snakes, fish, small animals. They catch their food using their claws called talons.
This book is about Wild Cats, it has different kinds of cats, it shows how fast they run and it shows how fat is the cat and it shows how many does it way. My favorite cat is the cheetah because it runs fast with big spots. I like they show how longare they.
DIAGRAMS

In the following examples, these English Language Learners chose to draw and write about the differences in clouds. They learned about them during an Into English! lesson. After the students completed these diagrams, they went outside to compare their drawings with actual clouds.

Diagrams are another way for the English Language Learner to organize their thoughts, in their own way. The use of diagrams helps the ELL to identify the important information. It also allows students to relate the new information to what they already know.
The clouds are

The stratus cloud is strato.
Cumulus clouds separate and differ

Stratus clouds are long and low

Cirrus looks like a ghost
The next two examples, from the books, *A Silly Snowy Day*, and *Blackberries in the Dark*, show that charts can be written or visual.

Charts provide a way for the ELL students to synthesize the key ideas and personal interpretations they’ve gleaned from the text to enhance their reading comprehension.
WEBS

Students have found webs useful in my classroom as they prepare to write about what they have read. There are several pre-made webs available that can be run off and distributed to the students. My students have become adept at creating their own webs on a sheet of notebook paper.

Webs support the English Language Learner's comprehension by allowing them a venue for organizing their thoughts and then sharing their impressions with their native-English speaking peers.
ART

The following student examples show artistic interpretations of the story, *A Silly Snowy Day*.

Art is a very powerful tool, pictures often stimulate oral language. It can be found within several different multiple sign systems. Art allows those students who are having trouble expressing themselves verbally, to use artistic expression to show their understanding of the text.
In a unit on jazz music, coupled with Black History Month, my students worked in groups and read stories about various African Americans. They used such multiple sign systems as: Anomalies, Graffiti Board, webs and diagrams to comprehend the text.

The culminating activity consisted of the students choosing a piece of jazz music to accompany their reading of a passage of the story to the rest of the class. Not only did my students learn about influential people like Duke Ellington, Ruby Bridges and Jesse Owens, they also learned the history of jazz music, in a very hands-on way.

The benefit of using music is that it stimulates creativity. When English Language Learners look to music to enhance a text, it helps them delve deeper into the meaning of the story.
Drama has been described in this project in one of two ways: plays and reader’s theater. The latter is probably the least stressful for students because they do not have to memorize lines. Last year my class read a children’s version of Romeo and Juliet, then wrote and performed their own reader’s theater scripts.

Earlier in the same year, students were learning about the Civil Rights Movement. One group created a short play depicting the events surrounding Rosa Parks’ arrest.

Drama is an important source for increasing the reading comprehension of the English Language Learner. The students are able to actually live the interpretation of the text.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


