CHAPTER 9
The Case of Ying

The Members of a Teacher Study Group Learn about Fostering the Reading Comprehension of English Learners

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SETTING THE CONTEXT: SUSAN, ELENA, AND SANDY EXPLORE WAYS TO IMPROVE LITERACY INSTRUCTION

Susan, Elena, and Sandy are three fifth-grade teachers who teach in White Pine School District (pseudonym). White Pine School District is situated in White Pine, a moderate-sized community in the west. Susan and Sandy are white monolingual English-speaking women. They were born and raised in White Pine and have taught only in the White Pine School District. Elena has been a teacher in White Pine School District for 10 years. She was born in Greece, and Greek is her first language; she speaks and writes fluently in both Greek and English.

In the past, most of the children in White Pine School District (i.e., almost 90%) were white and monolingual. Increasingly, over the past decade, the numbers of children who speak a language other than English as their first language (hereafter referred to as English language learners, ELLs) have risen dramatically. For example, 70–80% of the children in some schools in White Pine School District are ELLs. Additionally, many of the rest of the schools in the district are serving large and growing numbers of ELLs. There are no bilingual education programs in White Pine School District. The district does provide some English as a second language (ESL) support, but it is limited. Approximately 40% of the children at Evergreen Elementary (pseudonym), where Susan, Sandy, and Elena teach, are ELLs. The teachers, like many teachers throughout the United States, find that over the past few years they are teaching increasing numbers of ELLs (Gándara, 2007; Morse, 2003; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003).

Given the limited district support available for their ELLs, the trio decided to create its own study group to learn more effectively foster the literacy development of their ELLs. They decided to take turns having Thursday evening dinner meetings at one another's homes.

INITIAL THURSDAY COLLABORATIVE STUDY MEETINGS: FOCUSING ON YING'S LITERACY LEARNING

During their first study group conversation, these teachers decided that they wanted to employ a two-pronged approach to improve their instruction for ELLs. Their first goal was to collaboratively study the effectiveness of their instructional practices for their ELLs. Realizing that they could not focus on all of the ELLs in their respective classrooms, they decided to select one or two representative students as their focus. They also decided that Sandy would focus on her classroom during their first meeting. She told her colleagues that she wanted to select an ELL named Ying in her classroom. Ying was a Hmong1 child who had been in the United States for almost 2 years. Sandy explained that Ying could read aloud the English words in many texts, but, when asked about his reading, he often had no idea what he had read. Additionally, Sandy said that Ying never voluntarily spoke in class. She wanted to try to determine how to work with Ying to improve his English reading comprehension. Because Ying's strengths and needs were similar to those of many ELLs in all three teachers' classrooms, the team agreed that they would begin their work focusing on ways to foster Ying's English comprehension.

1Like many Hmong who have come to the United States over the past decades, Ying and his family were originally from Laos. Many Hmong families left Laos after the Vietnam War to avoid mistreatment by the communist Lao government. Also, like many other Hmong families, Ying and his family lived in Thai refugee camps for many, many years before coming to the United States.
Second, they decided to read and discuss professional literature on effective instructional practices for ELLs. In particular, their professional reading included literature on facilitating the English comprehension of ELLs, second-language acquisition, and the impact of sociocultural factors on second-language learning. They decided to use their reading and discussions about their classroom practices to design and implement new instructional practices in their classrooms. In short, they would draw on professional literature as one means to evaluate how they taught literacy in general and comprehension in particular.

The teachers met once a week on Thursday evenings. During the first meeting they created a reading list and a reading plan and began reading according to their established deadlines. (Appendix 9.1 contains their reading list.) Each week, one teacher was to bring a videotaped lesson segment of a portion of a literacy lesson from her classroom. Thus each teacher shared a video segment from her teaching approximately once every 3 weeks. (Note that the teachers kept their plans open enough to focus on the same lesson segment for several weeks if it made sense to do so.)

After watching the video clip, the teachers critiqued the video segment, drawing on their own backgrounds and experiences, as well as related professional readings. During one of the first weeks, Sandy brought a video clip of a lesson segment that occurred as she, Ying, and her class read and discussed the book Maniac Magee (Spinelli, 1990). Maniac Magee (which is part fantasy and part realistic fiction) is about a little white boy (nicknamed Maniac) who lost his parents at the age of 4, moved in with his feuding aunt and uncle, and then ran away from their home at the age of 12 to a town called Two Mills, Pennsylvania—a town that was half black and half white. The first family Maniac encountered in the town—the Beales, an African American family—invited him to live with them when they found out that Maniac was homeless. Overall, in Two Mills, Pennsylvania, Maniac is exposed to issues of prejudice, racism, and homelessness. Sandy addressed the issues that Maniac encountered in the story with her students as the class read the text of Maniac Magee together. Sandy did want everyone in her class to read and discuss this engaging text, but not all of her children were reading at the fifth-grade level. Consequently, during reading time, she had all of her students sit in a semicircle around her with a copy of the text. She read much of the text aloud to the students as they followed along in their own texts.

She also chose various students to take turns reading small excerpts of text aloud in a round-robin fashion. This would, she believed, allow all children to hear and discuss the story even if all of them couldn’t read the story on their own.

The following excerpt, which Sandy shared with her colleagues, is taken from the final 6-minute portion of a whole-group lesson, when Sandy’s class was in the process of constructing two charts together. On one chart the students identified the conflicts that had occurred in the story to that point, and on the other chart they identified different contrasts in the story. Sandy led the discussion and wrote the children’s suggestions on the charts during the discussion. The students had just mentioned that the author contrasted black and white. Sandy wrote “black versus white” on the chart, and the discussion proceeded as follows:

SANDY: I don’t know why I put versus. I guess because one opposes the other or one is on the opposite end of the other. What else did we see contrasted in the story? What was he [Maniac] without for so long?
SALLY: House.
BILL: (laughing) Chicken pox.

Bill’s comment had nothing to do with the ongoing conversation and was largely ignored by everyone, including the teacher. The teacher followed up on Sally’s comment.

SANDY: Homes versus—what’s the opposite of having a home?
UNION RESPONSE: Homeless, homelessness.
DAN: He was without parents for a while.
SANDY: OK.

1 Although Sandy was not aware of the many instructional problems with round-robin reading, her two fellow study group members were. Throughout their discussions together, Eliza and Susan taught Sandy about the many drawbacks of round-robin reading. See Worthy, Broadus, and Ivy (2001) for a complete discussion of round-robin reading as a poor instructional practice.

2 During typical whole-group lessons, all 22 of Sandy’s students sat in a semicircle around her. Each child had a copy of Maniac Magee. Sandy took many turns modeling fluent reading as she read portions of the text aloud and discussed those portions of the text with her students. She also chose different children to take turns reading one or two paragraphs of text at a time. After each student read a portion of the text, the whole class stopped to discuss what had just been read.
SALLY: Still, I mean they're [referring to the Beale family] still not his real parents but ... 

DAN: But they're [i.e., Mr. and Mrs. Beale] like parents.

SANDY: So we could have parents.

CHRIS: Legal, not legal, but guardians.

SANDY: And none. What are some of the other contrasts that you saw in the story? Let's start bringing some of these out. This story is a combination of two types of genres. (modified from Raphael, Brock, & Wallace, 1997, pp. 196, 201)

After watching the brief 6-minute lesson segment with her colleagues, Susan asked if they could watch the segment again to see what else they might discern from rewatching it. So the triad watched the segment again and took notes about what they noticed as they watched it. The following discussion ensued between Sandy, Susan, and Elena:

ELENA: Did you notice that three Anglo children[5] in your class [i.e., Sally, Dan, and Chris] and you, Sandy, did all of the speaking during the filmed segment?

SANDY: Hmm ... actually, I didn’t notice that until you mentioned it, Elena. As I think about it, however, I think that may be a common occurrence in my classroom. I’ll have to watch for that more as I teach. Clearly, if only a few of the white children are talking, I’m not providing a space for everyone’s voice to be heard. I have African American children, Latino children, and Asian American children in my classroom in addition to Anglo-American children. All of the children need to have opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas.

SUSAN: You know, another thing that I noticed was that when you asked questions, Sandy, you seemed to ask questions to the student audience in general rather than addressing your questions to any particular child; thus the conversational floor was seemingly open to anyone who might like to respond. Additionally, no one raised his or her hand to be called on by you; instead, Sally, Dan, and Chris took turns making and building on one another’s comments. And, frankly, their comments revealed a quite sophisticated understanding of the story. They knew, for example, the difference between legal guardians and guardians—like the Beales, who were just informally looking after Maniac.

ELENA: Yes, I agree that the comments made by the three children revealed a sophisticated understanding of the story. I’d like to return to your comment about turn taking, Susan. While I think that it is important to acknowledge the benefits of allowing children the opportunity to decide whether or not they want to speak, I have to tell you that as an immigrant and English learner, myself, there are plenty of times I’d never enter a conversation in English unless someone made it a point to invite me into a conversation—maybe by asking my opinion or posing a question of some sort to me. It can be very intimidating to learn a new language and a different culture, and sometimes a gentle nudge to join the conversation is all an English learner needs.

SANDY: You know, Elena, your comments remind me of one of the readings we did for this week. Li [2004] pointed out that teachers must be aware of the fact that students from different cultures can be socialized to "do schoo." in very different ways. For example, the "norm" for doing school in Thailand, where Ying attended school, may have been to sit quietly in rows, do your work, and only speak when spoken to. If that happened to be the case for Ying, he would likely never speak in class unless I invited him to do so. Come to think of it, I don’t recall Ying ever voluntarily speaking in class. I’ll have to pay closer attention to this and make sure to gently invite him into the class conversation from time to time.

SUSAN: You know, ladies, it strikes me that we have no way of assessing Ying’s comprehension of that part of the reading lesson since he didn’t talk at all during that segment: of the lesson. Sandy, do you have any writing or work samples at all that we can look at to try to get a sense of Ying’s comprehension?

SANDY: Good question, Susan. Actually, no, I don’t. In general, we’re mostly reading aloud and discussing this particular book. While I do have the children write in their journals sometimes, I mostly rely on discussion to get a sense of the children’s evolving understandings of the story. Clearly, with over 20 children in the class, it is hard to get a handle on what each child understands on an ongoing basis. Also, based on the video segment we just watched, it is also becoming clear to me that a lot of the children in class aren’t even talking. Consequently, I really don’t have a handle on how most of the children in the class are interpreting the story when I

[5] The racial makeup of Sandy’s class was as follows: 50% white, 25% black, 25% Latino and Asian American.
don't have any data (in the form of discussion comments or written work) to draw on.6

ELENA: Sandy, I really agree with you that it would be important to try to figure out additional ways to get a sense of how each child is understanding the story. It does strike me that it would be especially helpful to try get a handle on Ying's understanding of the story, in particular, since he is one of our focus students for this project.

SANDY: Well, one thing I might try in order to assess Ying's comprehension is to ask him to rewatch this segment of the lesson to see what he understands from the lesson. I could give him the opportunity to speak in Hmong or English and then have another, more fluent Hmong student in my class, named Dong, translate, if necessary.

ELENA: I think that is a great idea!

SUSAN: Me, too! Let's focus on Ying again next week when we meet. Also, let's continue with our readings pertaining to comprehension and English learners.

SANDY MEETS WITH YING AND DONG AT SCHOOL

Early the next week at school, Sandy enlisted the help of Dong. Ying, Dong, and Sandy sat down during lunch to watch and discuss the 6-minute videotape of the literacy lesson that Sandy had taken to her teacher study group. Sandy decided that she would videotape their conversation so that she could show the videotaped conversation to her colleagues at their next Thursday evening meeting. As a brief recap, Sandy had begun the lesson in question with an introduction to the words contrast and conflict. Further, the class had discussed contrasts and conflicts in this final portion of the lesson as they constructed large contrast-and-conflict charts together. They had already identified and discussed the contrast between Maniac's inside name at the Beales' house (Jeffrey) and his outside name in the community (Maniac), and they had identified and discussed contrasts between black and white.

During the lunchtime meeting, when Ying, Dong, and Sandy met to watch the 6-minute video clip of the lesson, Sandy told Ying that as they watched the lesson segment together Ying could stop the tape any time he'd like to make comments and ask questions. Ying stopped the videotape of the lesson slightly before the conversational segment described earlier in this chapter and after the class had already generated the name and color contrasts Sandy had listed on the chart. Ying asked, "What are they say?" Sandy responded that she was not sure what he was referring to and asked if he would like her to rewind the tape so that she could try to discern what he was asking. They rewound the tape to Sandy's original words during the lesson, "Are there any other contrasts that we've run across?" Then the following discussion ensued between Ying, Dong, and Sandy:

SANDY: Oh, contrasts? (to Ying) Do you know what contrasts are?
DONG: Contractions or contrasts?
SANDY: (carefully enunciating) Contrast. (looking at Ying) Do you, do you know what a contrast is?
YING: (Speaks in Hmong to Dong.)
DONG: He said, he said, like a race or something?
SANDY: (confused) Like a race?
DONG: Yeah.
SANDY: You mean like trying to run fast or something? Oh, oh, oh, contests!
YING: Yeah. (begins talking in Hmong to Dong.)
DONG: Not contests, contrasts.
SANDY: (to Ying) You thought she said contests?
YING: Yeah.
SANDY: Oh, OK. (modified from Raphael et al., 1997, pp. 196, 201)

Ying then asked if a contrast is something you "sign your name to." Sandy said that she suspected he was referring to a contract. They talked about the definition of contract, and Sandy mentioned that the word contract is different from contrast. Then they discussed the definition of the word contrast and talked about how Sandy used the word in class.

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6Although Sandy initially spent quite a bit of time engaging in whole-group reading instruction, which included round-robin reading and oral discussion, across time she came to learn that this was not effective literacy instruction for her students in general and her ELs in particular. Susan and Elena taught Sandy to provide meaningful daily reading instruction to small groups of children who were grouped according to their appropriate instructional reading levels.
FOLLOWING THURSDAY EVENING MEETING BETWEEN SANDY, SUSAN, AND ELENA

That Thursday, Sandy took the videotape of the conversation between Sandy, Ying, and Dong to her meeting. After the trio watched the videotaped conversation between Sandy, Ying, and Dong, the following discussion ensued:

SUSAN: Wow, I'm so glad that you followed up by talking with Ying and Dong, Sandy. That was so informative!

SANDY: No kidding. Before that conversation with Ying and Dong, I had absolutely no idea how confused Ying was about central ideas we were discussing in the lesson that day. For example, in our class discussion of the story, we were talking about conflicts and contrasts—for example, black-white, having a home-homelessness, parents-guardians-legal guardians, and so forth). Clearly, Ying had no understanding of the central concept, contrast. In fact, he thought that we were talking about contestas (as in races) or possibly contracts (as in legal documents).

SUSAN: Yes, I, too, am so glad that you got that additional information, Sandy. It raises two sets of issues that would be helpful for me to explore relative to working with the English learners in my classroom. First, I'd like to examine research-related considerations I should take into account as I design literacy lessons to foster the comprehension of my English learners. Second, I want to explore how I can design my literacy lessons more effectively so that my English learners comprehend the concepts and ideas I want to teach them. And, I think I need to build into my lesson design ways to gauge my English learners' confusions on an ongoing basis during every lesson.

ELENA: Yes, I'm interested in sorting out both of these issues, too. I think that some of the readings we have been doing can be helpful in this regard. For example, regarding the first issue you raise, Susan, as the study we read by Avalos [2003] suggests, fostering English learners' comprehension is a complex undertaking. We, as teachers, have to pay attention to text-based features (such as vocabulary and syntax) and reader-based features (such as students' backgrounds and their cultural knowledge) when we are designing literacy lessons for our students.

SANDY: So, applying these ideas to the case of Ying, it would be important for me to not just assume that Ying knows what the words conflict and contrast mean. Rather, I should design my lessons to explicitly teach the central vocabulary words in my lessons. This should be helpful to all students, and especially the English learners. As we learned from reading the text *Robust Vocabulary Instruction: Bringing Words to Life* [Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002], students may or may not have conceptually deep understandings of vocabulary words. Explicit instruction over key vocabulary, then, is crucial to help all students, including English learners, to develop deeper levels of understanding of these key words.

SUSAN: Yes, and we know that quality vocabulary instruction impacts children's comprehension. Recall that Carlo and her colleagues [2004] explored relationships between improvement in vocabulary and improvement in reading comprehension. They found that improvement in vocabulary did, in fact, improve students' reading comprehension.

ELENA: I think that it is also important to point out that the nature and structure of a child's first language can also impact his or her ability to learn and comprehend in English. For example, Loizou and Stuart [2003] found that children whose first language was English and whose second language was Greek outperformed students whose first language was Greek and second language was English. While this initially struck me as strange, their explanation was that English-to-Greek students outperformed Greek-to-English students because Greek is more orthographically regular than English, and it is harder to move from a language that is more phonetically regular to one that is more complex orthographically than the other way around.

SANDY: While I will admit that I know little about languages other than English, I can see that the nature of the child's first language really matters. Realistically, I can't learn all of the languages my children speak, but I can start to learn a little bit about them to help me have a sense of how they are related to English and how I might use this information to design literacy lessons. For example, most speakers of Asian or African languages may have difficulty with a and the because most languages on those continents do not use articles. Also, sometimes sounds in one language may not exist in another language. It is important for us as teachers to know that when sound variations do not exist in a speaker's native language, it is very difficult for students to produce them in the early stages of acquiring English [Lapp, Flood, Brock, & Fisher, 2007; see also Chapter 3, this volume, for similar work by Bear and Smith].

SUSAN: I want to return to one of the central points you identified this evening as important to consider when working with English learn-
ers. You suggested that we need to structure lessons in ways to foster comprehension and, in the process, explore ways to constantly monitor our English learners' understandings during our lessons. I think that the work of Saunders and Goldenberg (1999) raises important points in this regard. They studied various aspects of using literature-based instruction with English learners. They found that the combined use of instructional conversations and literature logs improved the factual and interpretive story comprehension for all students in their study; however, the extent of the combined effects depended on the language proficiency of the English learners—that is, students in the early stages of learning English appeared to benefit more from the combined use of literature logs and instructional conversations than students at other levels of English proficiency. In short, I think that this work illustrates that our English learners need plenty of opportunities to write—such as in their literature logs—and engage in meaningful, scaffolded conversations—such as instructional conversations—during our lessons.

Sandy: Yes, I can see that just talking about definitions of words and central concepts in stories is especially problematic for English learners. They need to see words and ideas in print, they also need to see pictures and realia, and they need plenty of opportunities to write to express their evolving understandings of stories. You know, at this point, I'd appreciate drawing on the ideas we have been discussing to explore some specific lessons we might design to more effectively foster the comprehension of our English learners.

Susan: If you two wouldn't mind indulging me, I've been thinking about this over our last few meetings, as well as tonight. I'd like to share some thoughts with you.

Elena: Of course! We're anxious to hear your ideas, Susan!

**DESIGNING AN EFFECTIVE LESSON FOR ELLs: SUSAN'S IDEAS**

I recently read a book by Fitzgerald and Graves (2004) that focused on providing quality literacy instruction for English learners. Fitzgerald and Graves (2004) emphasized the importance of providing prereading, during-reading, and after-reading instruction for English learners. So, in thinking about how I'd restructure a lesson for Ying and other English learners, I would set the lesson up based on their ideas. I think that Ying could really benefit from explicit instruction, in which he is taught key concepts in a small group prior to focusing on them in the larger group. In this way Ying would be taught the important background knowledge he needed to be able to participate in the whole group. This approach would serve at least two functions. First, covering the same twice would deepen his understanding of ideas related to the text. Second, prior preparation on key whole-group lesson concepts would enable him to participate in the whole-group community and thus to become a contributing participant in the broader classroom community.

**Prereading Instruction**

Before the whole-class lesson, I would provide some scaffolded instruction in a small-group setting. During this small-group lesson, I would preteach the concept of *contrasts* and *conflicts*. To begin, I would help Ying and the other students in the group who need language support to understand the concept of *conflict*. If we are going to discuss this as a whole group and use this concept to engage with the *Maniac McGee* text, it will be important for Ying to fully understand the word in a variety of contexts. I would help Ying and the other children in his small group to create a web and place the word *conflict* in the center. I would have the students put words around the central word *conflict* that define, describe, or serve as examples of *conflict*. I could treat this web much like a pretest and see what understandings each student brought to the lesson. After I assessed each web, I would make some instructional decisions. It would then be necessary to describe *conflict* in our own local contexts and ask such questions as: Have you had any conflicts at home? Do you and any siblings argue? What about? How do you resolve these conflicts? Do you ever have conflicts at school? Why do you think these conflicts occur?

After we discussed answers to these questions, I would then ask each child to create an individual web in his or her *Maniac McGee* personal journal. In this journal, the students in this particular language support group would include key vocabulary terms with definitions, as well as pictures, to illustrate their understanding of the vocabulary and key concepts.

Once the small group seemed to have a good understanding of the term *conflict*, I would read aloud some or all of the chapter that we would be reading in the next day's whole-group lesson. In this manner, the students would be prepared and able to fully participate in the whole-group lesson rather than hearing and sorting out key concepts for the first time in the whole group. Students in this small group would read and discuss important conceptual ideas relative to the story in a safe environment, one in which they will feel comfortable asking for clarification on any aspect of the chapter. As we read, I would highlight and invite the
small group to find places in the text that related to the word conflict. I
would give each student a small pack of sticky notes and, as we read the
chapter, have them place sticky notes on places they wanted to discuss or
clarify ideas.

As the discussion continued, I would make sure that the members
of the small group had an understanding of the book as a whole, and we
would discuss any other concepts or vocabulary unfamiliar to them and
have them record these words in their personal journals. As the discus-
sion of the chapter came to a close, I would help this group prepare for
the whole-class discussion that will take place the next day by giving
them a sticky note of another color and having them mark places where
they could potentially contribute to the whole class’s understanding of
conflict. Students in this small group would then mark two or three dif-
ferent places or passages in the text that they feel are good examples of
conflict. I would even encourage them to share their personal examples of
conflict; they could first practice with a partner and then share their ideas
with the rest of the class, so that all class members could understand the
concept at a deeper level.

Whole-Class Read-Aloud of Maniac McGee
and Concept Lesson

The next day in the whole-class lesson, I would put the word conflict up
on the white board and put it in the middle of a web. Then I would ask
students to share ideas they had about conflict—what they know about it from their own personal and literary experiences. I would chart out
answers and then read aloud the first few pages of the chapter and ask
students to think about how Maniac deals with conflict in the text. Also,
I would ask what conflicts the students notice in the story. In the previous
day’s lesson I would have helped Ying to prepare for this specific discus-
sion, and so I would call on him first, as I would have prompted him to
participate.

I would model to the whole class how to complete a T chart. On
the left we will record the page number, and on the right we record our
thoughts on conflict. (On another day we could look at the concept of
contrasts and the impact this concept has in the story.) I would ask all
students to place a sticky note on at least one part that highlights their
interpretation of the term conflict. I would circulate around the room
and check in with Ying, who already would have two or three examples,
and encourage him to share his ideas with his partner and to look for
additional ideas to share.

Then I would ask the students to partner read the rest of the chap-
ter, looking for evidence to support their notions of conflict in the text. I
would be careful to make sure that the dyads were constructed carefully
according to reading ability. Students should place sticky notes in their
books, as well as mark pages and interpretations in their personal jour-
nals, and then we would come back together as a whole group and discus
the concepts even further. After concluding as a whole group, I would
choose Ying to participate so he could share the sticky notes we prepared
the previous day. Throughout this lesson on conflict, the students and I
would include examples from the text, as well as from our personal and
literary experiences.

After Whole-Group Reading Lesson

After the whole-group lesson concluded, I would meet with a series of
small groups. First, I would meet with Ying’s group and discuss the whole-
group lesson that just took place to check for comprehension. I would
ask what questions they may still have and what interpretations and con-
nections they made to the chapter. I would then go to the next chap-
ter to prepare Ying and his group for the next day’s reading of Maniac
McGee. Having read the chapter previously, I would have marked some
places that might pose some problems for Ying and other English learners
for preteaching. Additionally, I would leave the discussion open to
allow Ying to share his own insights and to stop at any place in our
small-group work where comprehension was lost. I would ask Ying to
record key terms in his personal journal that he found confusing and use
examples as well as pictures to help him come to a better understanding
of the chapter and the book as a whole.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS: WHAT WE LEARNED
ABOUT COMPREHENSION INSTRUCTION FROM YING,
ONE ANOTHER, AND OUR PROFESSIONAL READING

As a result of the collaborative study-group conversations that involved
analysis of instruction shared through videotaped clips of lessons con-
ducted by us (i.e., Sandy, Susan, and Elena) and a discussion of the
insights we were gaining from our professional readings, we conclude
that our best comprehension instruction for all of our students occurs
when:
1. We explicitly teach comprehension-related strategies by model-
ing, explaining, and thinking aloud about them before inviting
our students to try them (Duffy, 2003).
2. We do not assume that our ELLs already understand key concepts

and/or vocabulary without double-checking to make sure that they actually understand them (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004).

3. We provide explicit, meaningful instruction pertaining to key vocabulary and concepts that all students need to know to understand the stories we are reading by using pictures, diagrams, realia, actions, and so forth (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2002; McLaughlin & Allen, 2002).

4. We provide myriad daily opportunities for our students to talk with us (individually, in small groups, and in whole groups) and their peers and to write informally (usually in journals) about their evolving understandings in literacy (and content subjects) so we can get ongoing insights into our children's thinking and learning and base our instruction on our students' instructional needs (Collins Block & Pressley, 2002).

5. We provide daily, explicit, meaningful reading instruction in small reading groups that are composed of students grouped according to their appropriate reading instructional levels (Lapp et al., 2007).

6. We make sure that our reading lessons are structured in terms of prereading activities, during-reading activities, and after-reading activities in order to provide appropriate scaffolding and support to our English learners (Fitzgerald & Graves, 2004).

7. We support our students in all of their literacy attempts (Pressley, 2000).

8. We remain learners who continue to work in study groups with colleagues and engage in meaningful inservice classes so that we can continually learn new ways to meet the literacy learning needs of our students (Florio-Ruane, 2001).

REFERENCES


Carlo, M. S., August, D., McLaughlin, B., Snow, C. D., Dressler, D., Lippman, D. N., et al. (2004). Cosing the gap: Addressing the vocabulary needs of

3Sandy, Susan, and Elena agreed that their small groups should be flexible, not static. By regularly assessing their students' strengths and needs, these teachers grouped and regrouped students as their instructional needs changed.


Resources for Learning about Language, Culture, and Teaching


Howard, G. R. (1999). We can't teach what we don't know: White teachers, multiracial schools. New York: Teachers College.


Resources for Teachers of English Learners


Resources on Understanding the Second-Language Learning Process


