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Effective Whole Group Literacy Instruction For Teaching English Language Newcomers Through Total Physical Response And The Use Of Visuals

Nicole Holmes
Hamline University

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Effective whole group literacy instruction for teaching English Language

newcomers through Total Physical Response and the use of visuals

by

Nicole Holmes

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Capstone Project Facilitators: Laura Halldin and Susan Manikowski

Content Expert: Peg Wright

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Overview

Over the last four years I have grown tremendously as an educator. I had the opportunity to experience first-hand what it is like going to another country to teach without knowing the language. In addition, within my classroom I have had students arrive without any background in English, but expected to learn. These experiences have ignited a passion in me to ensure English Language (EL) newcomers have the best possible support and lessons within my classroom. The research question is: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching EL newcomers?*

Teaching in Uganda

My teaching career started by volunteering in Njeru, Uganda, at Greater Love Nursery and Primary School. I taught Primary Four and Primary Five mathematics. The national language of Uganda is English, yet many students are not fluent in English as they speak their tribal language at home. Most of my students were not able to understand me because of my American English accent. I had the exact same issue with their English accent. This was compounded by my unfamiliarity with Lugandan or Lusoga, which were two of the more common tribal languages my students spoke. I experienced the struggle of trying to communicate with my students in class and to get to know them on a personal level through this language barrier. We communicated through drawings and acting as we tried to get our point across. During my five months teaching in Uganda I learned a plethora of Lugandan and my students grew in their English as well. We would get

frustrated at times not knowing what the other was trying to say. Knowing their frustration and their desire to know more drove both my students and me to know more in the other language.

Without realizing what we were using, my students and I utilized Total Physical Response (TPR) almost every day to communicate. "TPR is a language teaching method that was developed in the 1970s by American psychologist James Asher, a professor at San Jose State University, California" (Al Harrasi, 2014, p. 37). TPR is intended for children to feel like they are learning their first language by using physical actions. The actions might be as simple as pointing to a certain object or nodding and can get as complex as trying to act something out (Al Harrasi, 2014). The whole idea is that the students and the teacher use these physical movements to understand different words and phrases. Thinking back to my time in Uganda, this is precisely the method my students and I used on a daily basis by pointing, waving, nodding our heads, shaking our heads, and many others movements. Throughout the day, I would point to an object and my students would respond with what the object was in Lugandan and I would repeat the object in English. This allowed for easy communication of specific vocabulary words through hand gestures in order to build up our word knowledge.

Within the first week of teaching in Uganda, I had the opportunity to go out into the community to meet my students' grandmother, who was her primary caregiver. She did not speak any English and unfortunately I was not strong in my Lugandan. Despite our barrier in communication, it did not prevent us from having a conversation. I was able to greet the grandmother in Lugandan, but lacked additional skills. Afterwards, we proceeded to enjoy a conversation through actions and drawing pictures. Our

conversation revealed that my student and her five siblings lived in the same one-room hut with their grandmother. I learned they placed a high value on hospitality, because she insisted on cooking for me despite having very little. Through this interaction, I was able to understand her care for others and her desire for them to feel welcome when they enter her house.

Another way we were able to communicate with one another was through pictures. Whether it was drawing or showing pictures, we always knew that we could communicate that way. Difficulty presented itself in the form of a lack of Internet connection. With minimal Internet access, we relied on our drawing skills to communicate. One sunny afternoon during my first week teaching, I was sitting in the back of the classroom eating lunch. There were students running and playing outside on their hour lunch break. A student popped her head into the classroom, so I motioned for the student to come sit down. Next thing I know, we were having a conversation about our families. However this was not a verbal conversation; my student was drawing me a picture of every individual in her family. I was astounded at the detail and knowledge I was able to learn about her family through pictures alone. The drawing disclosed they lived in a mud hut, and that she had four brothers and one sister. She drew her dad in the sky above the hut and trees, and I was able to conclude that her dad had passed away. I also knew that both her mother and grandmother lived in the same hut. Discovering all this significant information concerning my student's family is the reason why I love using visuals. These were critical in getting my message across and for greater communication during my lessons. Visuals gave my students a voice even if they were not confident with the language.

The Turning Point of Teaching in America

Returning from Uganda, I had the privilege to teach at a school in a midwestern suburb. It is a diverse school with diverse learners. According to the Minnesota Department of Education, the school in which I teach has 63% of students who qualified for free and reduced lunch and 24% English learners. Within the school, 8.4% of the student body is Hispanic/Latino, .6% is American Indian, 31.2% is Asian, 34.6% is Black/African American, .1% is Pacific Islander, 15.2% is White and 9.9% is two or more races. My very first year at this school, I taught a student who knew no English. According to her entry survey (which all students have to take when enrolling in the district) and the English Language Department, she was an English language newcomer. Her family moved to my school district from Mexico. On her first day in class, I used Google Translate to ask her to show us where she was from. Our day was filled with TPR, as I acted each of our tasks for the day. I remember the student coming up to me and actioned as if she were using a utensil and putting it in her mouth. Then she put both of her hands out at the side of her body, palms up at shoulder height and shrugged her shoulders. It was obvious the student was wondering when we were going to eat. The ease of communicating through TPR is astounding. Through our actions, we were able to have a conversation concerning lunch time. Even though my student did not know English, she was still able to find out when we were eating.

During my classroom's morning meeting, we greet each other in a different language each week. The week prior to my EL newcomer arriving in my classroom, my students learned how to say "good morning" in Spanish. We were able to say "good morning" in her language on the EL newcomers first day. Seeing the smile radiate from

her face as we greeted each other in her language, I knew she was ready to learn. Throughout the next couple weeks the students began to understand the daily routine, and able to get further into our lessons every day. The students used TPR with her every day. I noticed the students at lunch and recess try to teach my newcomer games through actions. Additionally her vocabulary was increasing dramatically each day.

Current Curriculum

My classroom uses Benchmark Literacy (2014) for our reading and writing mini lessons curriculum and small group guided reading. I had the opportunity to use this curriculum for the last two years. I noticed there was a gap in the curriculum. It is effective for a learner who is proficient in English or very close to exiting our English Language program. However, in my experience, it is not ideal for newcomers in our EL program. There are several pictures included, but not pictures that can help explain the different vocabulary terms throughout the lesson. I believe TPR can be used within these lessons, but there is an absence of curriculum to help teachers understand when to use TPR. My goal within this capstone is to adapt the curriculum we currently have at our school to make it teacher friendly for EL newcomers. Through the use of TPR and visuals, I will add to the existing curriculum to benefit all students including EL newcomers.

Summary

The use of Total Physical Response and visuals is vital within a lesson for EL newcomers. I need to adapt and change the current curriculum to make sure that the EL newcomers can access the curriculum to support their learning. I will continue to research: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt*

curriculum for teaching EL newcomers? In chapter two I focus on researching literacy,

English language learners, Total Physical Response, and the use of visuals during lessons

for EL newcomers.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

During literacy instruction, teachers clearly state the lesson objectives. The aim is for students to comprehend the days learning outcomes. Within the classroom students come from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. Students who immigrate from outside of the United States may have little or no knowledge of the English language. Classrooms may range from students with no English knowledge to those being proficient in English, therefore it is important to use effective literacy instructional strategies. While these strategies benefit all students, they are especially important for English Language (EL) newcomers.

The Question

The focus of this research is: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching EL newcomers?* There are four specific topics covered and developed within this chapter relating to effective literacy instructional strategies: The research of literacy, English language newcomers, Total Physical Response, and the use of visuals during instruction. These topics will equip teachers and other educators how to effectively teach all students, especially EL newcomers, within a literacy lesson.

Literacy

What is Literacy? Literacy is the ability to read and write. "Best practices will vary necessarily according to situation and environment" (Hunt & Birks, 2004, p. 27). Teaching within a classroom, educators need to clearly present the goals and objectives

for each lesson (Hunt & Birks, 2004). Students need clear ideas of what they want to accomplish and the educators need clear goals on what they want students to have learned at the end of a lesson, unit, or year. It is also vital students are able to comprehend the content taught.

Important aspects of a literacy lesson, beyond the scope of this capstone to discuss in depth, are the need for culturally relevant pedagogy, formative and summative assessments and accommodation of different learning styles. Within the literacy lesson students need the opportunity to collaborate with one another through culturally relevant pedagogy (Hunt & Birks, 2004). When the lesson, unit, or year is coming to a close, teachers need to assess the students' knowledge and growth (Hunt & Birks, 2004). The best way to implement this as an educator is to acknowledge the different learning styles and allow for varied ways to measure their knowledge (Hunt & Birks, 2004). Teachers can use portfolio assessments, oral defenses, quizzes, essays, direct observation, peer or self-review or through different experiences (Hunt & Birks, 2004).

Comprehension. The first aspect to consider when having a student read is their comprehension. Comprehension is based on knowledge and regulation (Combs, 2014). When thinking about comprehension, visualize a balance beam. This beam has knowledge on one side and regulation on the other. Knowledge is compromised of three specific blocks, they include: knowing about strategies, how to use strategies, and when and why to use strategies (Combs, 2014). The other side is regulation, which also contains three blocks. They include self-monitoring and noticing when meaning breaks down, using appropriate strategies when meaning is lost, and self-correcting to establish meaning (Combs, 2014). In order to maintain balance, it is critical to have a balance

between knowledge and regulation. This allows for growth within the student. To comprehend a text with the balance of knowledge and regulation, there are multiple strategies used within the classroom. Common strategies used are questioning, summarizing, picturing, self-monitoring, recalling prior knowledge, making inferences, predicting, and determining importance (Combs, 2012). In any given classroom, teachers will have proficient readers as well as those who are working towards becoming proficient. Students who are proficient readers use their background knowledge to make connections to the reading (Combs, 2012), as well as use strategies to engage during reading. Conversely, a student who is not a proficient reader might have limited background knowledge which will likely result in the misinterpretation of the reading (Combs, 2012). Additionally, students who are not proficient readers might not challenge or pick up on inconsistencies within the reading (Combs, 2012). Students' persistence within a certain text will also indicate their confidence with reading. Highly confident readers have greater motivation to get through a difficult text than students with low self-confidence (Combs, 2012). Because a difficult text with demanding vocabulary is challenging for some students to comprehend, it is important to include texts that are at each student's independent reading level (Combs, 2012).

Literacy focuses on the student's ability to read and write and necessity involves the need to learn new vocabulary words. It is important students have the opportunity to repeat new vocabulary words out loud (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). Saying new vocabulary words out loud, allows the student a deeper knowledge and meaning of that word by encoding the word in their brain (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). Thus, when the student engages in independent reading, they have an enhanced understanding of that

particular word (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). Silent Sustained Reading (SSR) can also help students develop a desire and love for reading. Since struggling readers need motivation, it is important to give students a choice when reading during SSR (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). The purpose of SSR is to promote the love of reading and because students are reading their own book, they are more motivated to keep learning new words based upon context clues within the story (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). Normally during SSR there is not academic work connected because the teacher is trying to instill the love of reading to the students (Ferlazzo & Sypnieski, 2017). As McEwing's (2011) research shows stories actually help improve the vocabulary knowledge and comprehension skills.

Within a balanced literacy lesson, the student needs clear objectives stated and the ability to comprehend what is taught (Hunt & Birks, 2004). When addressing EL newcomers, it is vital the teacher is aware of their academic needs and takes into consideration the importance of a well-balanced literacy lesson.

English Language Newcomers

As of 2014, over 23% of the children enrolled in school within the United States are children who are immigrants themselves or are from immigrant families (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). With almost one-fourth of the students enrolled in public and private schools in America speaking over 150 different languages, it is important to understand the process of enrollment in the English language program, incorporation of WIDA through standards and English Language levels of development, as well as the stress of learning a new language (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014).

Enrollment into the English language program. When entering the United States as an immigrant, each student is required to take a questionnaire the school district provides

(King & Bigelow, 2016). By using the questionnaire, there are three specific areas the school district is attempting to ascertain: the student's first language, their knowledge of English, and which language is spoken more often at home (King & Bigelow, 2016). If the questionnaire indicates the student does not know English or speaks a different language at home, the student will be required to take an English proficiency test (King & Bigelow, 2016). This test will determine the student's English ability and assign a level of proficiency. Students must also take the World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment-Access Placement Test (WIDA-APT) (King & Bigelow, 2016). This test is in place due to a 1974 Supreme Court ruling (Lau vs. Nicholas) which created and established a policy giving English language learners the right to adequate accommodations to make their learning meaningful and successful (King & Bigelow, 2016). After taking the placement test, the student is placed into one of six levels of English Proficiency. The levels range from level 1 to level 6 and are assigned the following nomenclature: Entering, Emerging, Developing, Expanding, Bridging, and Reaching. It is important to familiarize ones self with the enrollment process for EL students to better understand what level students are at when they enter the classroom.

WIDA standards and level of English proficiency. Within WIDA's six levels of English proficiency there are EL standards that correlate directly with each level and Minnesota State standards. A student coming in at the Entering stage knows very little or no English at all (WIDA, 2012). In the Entering stage, the student needs pictures or graphic representations of words or phrases (WIDA, 2012). Also needed are one-step commands and chronological steps that are easy to understand (WIDA, 2012). Within the second, Beginning stage, the student needs only vocabulary that is important to the

content area they are learning (WIDA, 2012). The student can start understanding and using phrases or short sentences (WIDA, 2012). In the Developing stage students understand more specific terms directly related to the content area. They are also able to use short sentences to convey understanding (WIDA, 2012). As a student moves into the Expanding stage, more technical terms are used to portray understanding (WIDA, 2012). The student can use and understand a variety of sentence lengths, including paragraphs (WIDA, 2012). Once the student enters the Bridging stage, they can use technical words to help reiterate their understanding (WIDA, 2012). Bridging stage allows students to communicate with peers and educators at a very high level. Once the student can demonstrates proficiency in listening, speaking, reading, and writing English (Reaching stage), the student may exit the program (WIDA, 2012).

According to the WIDA Handbook (2012), the standards framework initially released in 2004 has continually changed and developed with updated versions released in 2007 and 2012. The impetus for updating the standards framework according to WIDA is, "we continue to tirelessly promote our belief that ELLs enrich our school communities with their many contributions and strengths" (WIDA, 2012, p. 9). English Language teachers and homeroom teachers must collaborate and utilize through communication in regards to standards. The standards released by WIDA represent the social, instructional, and academic language that each child needs in order to be successful within each lesson (WIDA, 2012, p. 9). There are five English Language Development Standards according to WIDA:

1. English language learners communicate for Social and Instructional purposes within the school setting.

2.   English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts

necessary for academic success in the content area of Language Arts.

3.   English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts

necessary for academic success in the content area of Mathematics.

4.   English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts

necessary for academic success in the content area of Science.

5.   English language learners communicate information, ideas, and concepts

necessary for academic success in the content area of Social Studies.

While addressing the standards WIDA instills in the curriculum, it is important to take

the standards into consideration when teaching EL newcomers. These EL newcomers are

in the Entering stage according to WIDA and need scaffolded curricula that align with

each standard through the use of actions and visuals. "WIDA recognizes that language

learning is maximized in authentic and relevant contexts" (WIDA, 2012, p.10).

Stress. What does stress look like for EL newcomers? There are several different ways a

student who is learning English for the first time will exhibit stress. A student who has

immigrated to the United States with minimal English proficiency faces the longest

roadblocks to a successful academic career (Kim & Suárez-Orozco, 2014). "Competency

in the language spoken in the classroom not only affects objective understanding of

academic material and instruction but also shapes how students participate in the daily

life of the classroom" (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014, p. 231). Even the family's stress of

experiencing and adjusting to a new location can add emotional stress to the student

through their school work and making friends (Cairo, Sumney, Blackman, & Joyner,

2012). Another stressor for any EL newcomer is the relational aspect of connecting with

peers and teachers (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Also, "this means that immigrant youths who were proficient in English were more behaviorally engaged than less proficient immigrant youths" (Kim & Suárez-Orozco, 2014, p. 237). Our education system requires these students to demonstrate their knowledge on standardized tests which have been proven to not accurately assess EL students' full academic competency (Kim & Suárez-Orozco, 2014). Unfortunately, the stress does not conclude for these students upon high school graduation. Due to the sizeable adjustments needed to succeed in school the effects of stress last into adulthood (Musetti, Salas, & Perez, 2009). Scholars have proven the stress EL newcomers acquire can impact their learning and their relationships with peers and teachers.

How English language learners grow in proficiency. While there has been much research on English Language Learners, not until recently has there been research on what specific mechanisms influence students' English Language Proficiency (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Kim and Suarez-Orozco (2014) identify three major dimensions that directly impact student learning in general and English Language Proficiency in particular: behavioral, relational and cognitive engagements.

Behavioral engagements address a student's want, desires and effort in participating in various academic tasks (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Some examples of behavioral engagement include participating in discussion, turning in homework, and attentiveness to learning taking place in class (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014).

The second type of engagement important to EL newcomers is their relatedness to fellow classmates, teachers, and other school staff. This could mean emotional or relational engagement in which a student feels connected to and supported by the

individuals within the classroom (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). Whether it's a friend to play with on the playground or a fellow classmate who is willing to let the student borrow a pencil, these types of relational connections are critical to a student's development and English language acquisition.

The last type of engagement, and quite possibly the hardest to observe, is cognitive engagement. Cognitive engagement is the key to a student learning because it refers to the thought process and desire to learn more (Kim & Suárez-Orozco, 2014). In addition, cognitive engagement refers to the interest and curiosity an EL newcomer has in what they are learning in class (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014).

Among these three types of engagement-behavioral, relational and cognitive-it is imperative that the student has a balance. "Language is the most essential tool of communication and socialization" (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014, p. 231). Balance requires teachers and educators are aware of a student's engagement within the class. Knowing immigrant youth who are proficient in English are more likely to engage in learning, educators need to focus heavily on students who are not proficient in English to ensure they are engaged in academically supportive relationships (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). As an educator, it is critical to know a student's level of English proficiency does not indicate or predict the rate of change in relational engagement (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014, p. 237).

While discussing the best literacy practice for EL newcomers it is important to understand the English language learner's background. This includes the enrollment process for the EL newcomers, the embedded WIDA standards and English language proficiency levels, along with the added stress to those students (Kim & Suarez-Orozco,

2014). Not only is it vital to understand all these aspects of teaching and learning with EL

learners, but it is also critical to understand the importance of using Total Physical

Response during whole group instruction. The mastery of these fundamental aspects will

benefit the lesson plans created to help EL newcomer students.

Total Physical Response

What is Total Physical Response? Total Physical Response (TPR) is a type of

teaching style developed by James J. Asher in the early 1970's (Al Harrasi, 2014). The

teacher uses movement during the lesson to develop proficiency within the English

language. Students act out commands their teacher provides them to reach listening

fluency (Davidheiser, 2002). According to Asher (1966), it is paramount for students to

act out the commands so they retain and understand what the command is asking. "TPR

allows them (students) to get out of their seats and enjoy a physical experience while they

learn new vocabulary and phrases" (Gardner, 2011, p. 51). For example, for the word

"sit" the teacher physically sits down and the students repeat the word and perform the

action. Then the teacher uses the word as a command, such as "sit down," "sit in a chair,"

"sit right here." With each command both the student and teacher use the motion

correlated with the word until the students begin to grasp the new vocabulary word. TPR

includes three main aspects to consider, those which will be emphasized are: storytelling

vocabulary, engagement through movement, and comprehension of sentences. These

three sections accentuate the significance of TPR and the benefits students receive within

any particular literacy lesson.

Storytelling vocabulary. TPR is taught primarily through the use of hand gestures,

movement, and commands (Asher, 1969). TPR can also be used for storytelling, where

the teacher starts by introducing the vocabulary words for the story. The students and teacher say the vocabulary words and perform the action associated with the word. When finished introducing the vocabulary words, the teacher utilizes the actions during the story to help the students understand the word in context of the story (Bush & Kariuki, 2008). According to Bush and Kariuki (2008), most of the students are engaged in the lesson because of the active movement and participation that is required. It is important students are present in class because using TPR during storytelling requires the auditory piece of hearing the vocabulary words as well as the visual aspect of seeing the motion for the word association (Bush & Kariuki, 2008).

Engagement through movement. Engaging in any activity takes effort and this effort cannot be one-sided. This is also true within the classroom. For a student to engage in learning, the student needs to pay attention and participate. This directly relates to the research question regarding the best literacy practices for EL newcomers. For a teacher to get students engaged in learning, the teacher needs to create engaging lessons and students who are willing to learn. It is necessary the teacher be fully engaged in the lesson and show enthusiasm and excitement about the story or lesson being taught (Bush & Kariuki, 2008). Hwang, Shih, Yeh, Chou, Ma, and Sommool (2014) stated that "research supports the theory that physical movement can enhance the process of learning because involving learners' interaction by gestures has a positive effect on increasing learners' attention" (p. 432). The teacher needs to make sure that physical movements are being used within the lessons to allow the students to have maximum engagement during the lesson.

Gardner emphasized and explained the importance of engaging students during any particular lesson. Gardner wrote about a lesson given to adult English language learners that started with vocabulary words that were essential to understanding the lesson (2011). There were visuals provided with each vocabulary word, drawings on the chalkboard and white board, and the use of 3D objects to help the students understand the vocabulary words (Gardner, 2011). The students were learning about American football and trying to understand the rules of the game. The teacher needed the learners to physically perform the actions so they fully understood and comprehended American football (Gardner, 2011). Having the visuals and physically participating in the game allowed the students to grasp the concept and engage in the learning. The students were able to get out of their desks and physically move into a huddle, which was one of the vocabulary words in the beginning of the lesson (Gardner, 2011). According to Gardner, "all the students participated in the action, and the lesson was a great hit" (2011, p. 51). This specific lesson allowed students to apply their learning to a game in which the students had the opportunity to use the vocabulary words in motion.

Another lesson that was created and used to engage students during a lesson was about fruits and vegetables. The teacher wanted the students to understand vocabulary words such as chop, cut, stir, mix, and bake (Gardner, 2011). During this lesson the students were extremely excited about learning these new vocabulary words because they were able to use fake food and dishes to understand them (Gardner, 2011). The teacher also incorporated these vocabulary words into using sequence of events and recipe-writing activities (Gardner, 2011). The class was able to engage in learning through hands-on experiences and role play.

Through these specific instances of TPR in use within a classroom, the students were able to engage first-hand in learning through physically experiencing the vocabulary words and the objectives of the lesson. Although TPR initially focuses on listening and physically moving one's body to specific vocal commands from the teacher, students eventually interact together at different levels, and those able to communicate orally engage in conversation as they move around the classroom (Gardner, 2011 p. 51). Having the teacher interested in and willing to use TPR within the classroom can create an environment of engagement and the desire to learn through movement and conversation (Gardner, 2011).

Sentence Comprehension. Scholars have noted the importance of TPR because of the knowledge students get out of their learning. When Asher and his partners started TPR in the late 1960's, he thought the use of TPR would be for those learning vocabulary words (Asher, 1969). Elliot and Yountchi (2009) research showed that the students who used TPR had a greater retention of the second language they were learning than those who were not using TPR. Elliot and Yountchi (2009) also noted that not only did the retention rate increase, but that the students benefited from observing the command as well as performing the command themselves. Students need to watch the command being performed as well as participate which indicates the importance of both. Participating and watching the command helps with the comprehension of specific vocabulary words and sentences.

The belief and understanding behind TPR is that when language instruction and movement are incorporated into learning, the students are able to pick up on the language faster, with more accuracy (Asher, 1969). While Elliot and Yountchi (2009) were

teaching, they introduced TPR through the use of charades. These teachers and authors

wanted to introduce the language in a new way so the students could comprehend their

new language faster and with greater ease. The teacher introduced multiple action words

and went over the actions prior to the charades-like activity. Once the students practiced

with the words, actions and sentences, the students had to silently act out a sentence that

either had a multidirectional or unidirectional meaning (Elliot & Yountchi, 2009). While

the students were acting out the sentence, they had the opportunity to use props and

pictures to help solidify the meaning of any particular word or sentence. These props

helped the students understand what the sentence was without using words, thus allowing

students to have a greater understanding of words and sentences (Elliot & Yountchi,

2009).

Incorporating TPR, the use of physical movements and hand gestures, will play a

vital role in the creation and adaptation of lesson plans for two literacy units. The use of

TPR will allow students to understand and grasp vocabulary words and short sentences

significantly easier. Utilizing TPR during whole group instruction will allow all students

to be a part of the lesson and feel like a cohesive group of learners. Not only is it

important for teachers to incorporate TPR into the literacy lessons, but also the use of

visuals.

Visuals

Diving into instruction according to Louie and Sierschynski (2015), it is important

that no matter what level of English proficiency a student is, each student needs the

opportunity for close viewing or reading of different text. Close reading might be hard for

some EL students, but incorporating the use of pictures, 3D objects like a realia box and

videos into a literacy lesson and close reading, while also providing opportunities of wordless picture books will benefit all students. "Being able to make sense of the world begins with making sense of visual information" (Serafini, 2014, p. 1). Through the use of pictures and diagrams, literacy instruction strategies help English Language students develop knowledge and proficiency.

Visuals through pictures. Within a classroom setting, especially upper elementary the students are expected to read closely and dive into a particular text. This can be challenging for many students, even students who are native speakers (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). "Obviously, one possible obstacle is the lack of familiarity with the cultural content of the pictures" (Messaris, p. 9, 1994). Thinking specifically about EL students Louie and Sierchynski (2015) brought up a great question, "Where can we begin to teach ELs to read closely and critically in a language when many of them may still be struggling to identify all the words?" (p. 104). Many educators are not aware that even though wordless pictures do not have text, they are still organized in a meaningful way (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Many experts have suggested using wordless picture books for all students while introducing the reading process. As cited in Louie and Sierschynski, "Serafini (2014a) suggested that wordless picture books might be the best medium for introducing narrative conventions and reading processes to all readers (2015, p. 105). Incorporating wordless picture books or even a series of pictures during instruction for the reading process will allow students to better understand the process. "According to Langer, students are, at first, outside the world that has been created by the writer and must step into that world and move through it, making sense of it, before they can begin to understand plot and characterization" (Gorman & Eastman, p. 92, 2010).

Understanding the importance of incorporating visuals during instruction allows the teacher to incorporate them into the lesson.

A wordless picture book tells a complete story through the use of visuals and pictures, and without the use of words (Chaparro-Moreno, Reali & Maldonado-Carreno, 2017). The teacher can use portions of the book to allow students to understand the concept of the story without reading it. "The essence of literature lying within the visual and verbal text as well as in it embedded literacy elements and structures" (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015, p. 104). These pictures have to be able to deliver a whole story just through pictures (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). If the students have the skills to discuss or talk about the meaning of specific words, characters' actions or the story plot, the students will do better on standardized vocabulary tests (Chaparro-Moreno, Reali & Maldonado-Carreno, 2017). This is the art of visual storytelling as Louie and Seirschynski (2015) would say, "wordless picture books are far from simple" (p. 106). With the knowledge about the benefit of visuals through wordless pictures books, pictures, and 3D objects it is important the educator knows how to use them.

The English Language learners have the ability to engage in content that is more complex and be able to practice and use the students' voices to practice and move towards oral language proficiency with visuals (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Wordless picture books help students develop the skills needed prior to reading, such as sequence of events and inferencing (Chaparro-Moreno, Reali & Maldonado-Carreno, 2017). Each separate picture book can vary in the way they look depending on the plot and structure (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). According to Louie and Sierschynski (2015), there is the same amount of literary complexity found in picture books with words as in wordless

picture books. The wordless picture books are engaging to the individual who is looking through it because of the story or information within the book (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015).

Other possible visuals to be used within a classroom are videos, pictures and reali boxes (a collection of 3D objects). These visuals are all vital to whole group instruction, but the teacher needs to make sure the students make an informed decision of the best possible visual for the lesson (Cook, 2012). No matter the visual if it is used the right way, all students will benefit from them, especially the newcomer EL students.

Benefit for EL students. Wordless picture books, videos, realia boxes and pictures benefit all students including newcomer EL students. The framework and idea for wordless picture books are intertwined with best practices for EL students (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Knowing that any type of literacy instruction needs to allow the student to grow, these visuals give students time to put together thoughts and express their findings orally (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). "Krashen (1982) established the claim that ELs' understanding of what they listen to and what they read is fundamental to their success in language learning (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015, p. 104). This is essential and critical when reading and understanding vocabulary words through visuals. When students have the opportunity to share, they need time and multiple ways of sharing their findings even if there are grammar mistakes or limited vocabulary use (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Allowing students to have time to share their findings gives the English language students the opportunity to explore and dive deeper into the meaning through discussion (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). The visuals allow EL students to dive deeper into meaning; however it is imperative to note that visuals are not independent

from comprehending the meaning of the book. Knowing the benefits for EL students is

critical in understanding how academic talk can be used with visuals.

Academic talk. Diving into academic talk is important for students, but those students

who are shy or are not proficient in English this concept might be a daunting task. Some

strategies to use while teaching students with visuals would be to pair up students or

place in smaller groups. This allows students to collaborate and have meaningful

conversations (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Collaboration and reflection is proven by

research, that students, especially EL students, who have the time to reflect on their

learning and communicate where they are at have greater understanding and learning of

language (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). The students who always look to others for

answers or the teacher for answers have shown a great separation from those who self-

correct and reflect on their learning. Conversations give students time to use their

academic talk in all content areas to grow as a student (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015).

When students are given the opportunity to have discussion and conversation with peers

about the content, the student is able achieve academic literacy (Louie & Sierschynski,

2015). This is especially true when students of varying English levels are allotted the

time needed to have conversations within a literature group (Louie & Sierschynski,

2015). Making sure these groups have the time to have meaningful discussion allows

each student's voice to be heard (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Knowing the importance

on giving students time for discussion, leads to the vital role of using visuals to help

students order their thoughts (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). The graphic organizer can be

beneficial for both narrative texts and informational texts (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015).

Graphic organizers, such as story maps or Venn diagrams, are important tools to help EL

newcomers understand the concepts being taught (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). In order to have students get the most out of academic talk, students need to feel comfortable with using their voice and have adequate visuals. This will give students the confidence needed in order to grow in their English proficiency.

Engagement. What is engagement and what does it look like within the classroom? Student engagement is critical to the comprehension and retention of what is being taught. "Providing visuals, video, and graphic organizers builds comprehensibility of instruction for EL learners which increases the likelihood that instruction will be meaningful to students with different learning styles" (Colombo, 2012, p. 40). During Total Physical Response, the teacher can draw pictures or use images to get the meaning of the word across along with acting out the vocabulary words (Elliot & Yountchi, 2009). Using visuals during instruction can increase the engagement within the lesson. "Teachers should find ways to help ELs to understand abstract and complex language for example, by using practical demonstrations, pictures and graphs" (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015, p. 104). Not only do effective teachers engage students during a literacy lesson with the use of visuals, they also slow down the pace of conversation giving students, especially English Language students, time to comprehend and recall what is being taught (Louie & Sierschynski, 2015). Overall, the use of visuals during a literacy lesson is necessary for the comprehension of the content.

As Serafini (2014) stated, it is so important that students understand the world and that starts with the use of visuals. The use of wordless picture books, pictures, 3D objects and diagrams during literacy instruction help the EL students develop English knowledge and proficiency. The use of visuals are extremely important to the academic growth of

EL newcomers. This allows the students to make connections from the world to the text read in class. The visuals are used during the class' main literacy lesson. The literacy lesson and the comprehension of the lesson are key to the improvement of all students, especially EL newcomers. The use of visuals are extremely important to the updating and enhancement of the literacy lessons created through this capstone and research. Within each lesson there will be a type of visual used to help EL newcomers understand the lesson being taught.

Conclusion

The focus of this research is: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching EL newcomers?* Four specific topics were presented that must be considered in order to give EL newcomers the best possible literacy instruction. The topics that were clearly defined and researched were Total Physical Response, English language newcomers, use of visuals during instruction, and best literacy strategies. EL newcomers will benefit from the use of TPR and pictures during instruction. The lesson plans will lay out what fourth grade curriculum should look like for EL newcomers. Through the use of the Understanding by Design approach, I will enhance the current curriculum to benefit all students in my classroom.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

Introduction

As a fourth grade teacher, there is a key component to provide my students with the best possible instruction to enhance their learning. The purpose of this capstone is to improve the current reading curriculum, Benchmark Literacy (2014), to answer the question: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching English Language (EL) newcomers?* In this chapter, I will discuss the project description, setting, audience and users, and the Understanding by Design approach, which I am using to design my lesson plans.

Project description

Within the curriculum development, I will be adapting Benchmark Literacy, (2014). Benchmark Literacy (2014) curriculum is great for many students, but does not benefit EL newcomers. The purpose of the curriculum development is to help all students, especially EL newcomers, to understand vocabulary words being taught during the whole group lesson. Over a period of four weeks, a total of twenty lessons will be adapted to benefit EL newcomers which will include four units of five lessons in each. I will be adding three vocabulary words to each lesson, which will be taught at the beginning of each lesson. The lesson will have the teacher and students using Total Physical Response and visuals to understand the vocabulary words. I will provide a picture for each vocabulary word taught through visuals, and for the words that are being taught through TPR I will provide the action. Each unit I will give the teacher ideas on assessing the EL newcomers on the vocabulary words taught.

Setting

I teach at a public elementary school in the northwest suburbs of the Twin Cities area. There are roughly 700 students between grades pre-kindergarten and fifth in my school. I have 29 students within my fourth grade classroom, with a total of 117 students in the grade level. According to the Minnesota Department of Education (2017), the school has 63% of students qualified for free and reduced lunch. Similar to the national average of English learners in any given school, which is 23% (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014), my current school and classroom both have 24% English learners (Minnesota Department of Education, 2017). 8.4% of the students in the school are Hispanic/Latino, .6% are American Indian, 31.2% are Asian, 34.6% are Black/African American, .1% are Pacific Islander, 15.2% are White and 9.9% are two or more races (Minnesota Department of Education). The school serves a wide variety of students from all different races, ethnic and economic backgrounds. Five of my students are currently in the English Language program, and three of my students receive special education services. In addition I have one student who just moved to Minnesota from Mexico with no English knowledge. The students in the EL program range from those who are new to the school and country who know little or no English, to students who are about to exit the EL program having demonstrated proficiency in the English language. This information is just a snapshot of one classroom in fourth grade, but gives a good idea of the students being served within the school.

Audience and Users

Fourth grade teachers are the intended audience for the curriculum I am developing. Teachers who work with a large population of EL fourth grade students,

especially those with EL newcomers, will value this curricular enhancement. The curriculum lays out effective strategies for the teacher to implement in the fourth grade classroom; allowing EL newcomers to connect to the text. While the fourth grade teacher is the one implementing the curriculum, the students are the individuals who benefit from the implementation of this curriculum. I have not implemented this curriculum within my classroom, but I intend to next school year.

Curriculum Approach

Understanding by Design. Understanding by Design (UbD), formulated by McTighe and Wiggins (2005), is the framework I have chosen to utilize my changes and adaptations to the current Benchmark Literacy (2014) curriculum my school uses. The current format in Benchmark Literacy (2014), is conducive to the existing curriculum, but does not lend itself well to the adaptions I am proposing. The UbD format will allow me, as an educator, to utilize every piece of information needed within each lesson plan. According to Tomlinson and McTighe (2006), UbD focused on two specific aspects for a teacher: how we teach and the assessment and evidence collected. "The primary goal is delineating and guiding application of sound principles of curriculum design" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 2). Knowing the specifics of the framework itself is important for educators, because they have to apply the curriculum into meaningful teaching. "Quality curriculum should play a central role in meeting the core needs of students for affirmation, affiliation, accomplishment, and autonomy, but it is the teachers' job to make the link between the basic human needs of students and curriculum" (Tomlinson & McTighe, 2006, p. 16).

Looking specifically at curriculum planning, the UbD template focuses on three

important steps in creating the lesson plan. The first stage asks teachers to identify the

desired end result. The second stage requires teachers to determine appropriate

assessments. Lastly, teachers plan learning experiences and instruction. These three steps

will be utilized in order to create my four units incorporating TPR and visuals to enhance

the lessons for EL newcomers during whole group instruction.

      According to McTighe and Wiggins (2012), in the first stage of lesson planning, it

is extremely important to ask oneself, "What should students know, understand and be

able to do?" (p. 2). When creating lesson plans, starting at the objectives first allows the

lesson to stay focused with standards that tie back to the objectives before creating the

activity to teach the lesson (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). Specifically, this first stage

allows teachers to figure out their priorities for the lesson and what is most important

(McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). It is critical the teachers have a long-term goal established

prior to moving on to stage two (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

      In the second stage teachers ask themselves, "How will we know if students have

achieved the desired results? What will we accept as evidence of student understanding

and their ability to use (transfer) their learning in new situations?" (McTighe & Wiggins,

2012, p. 5). This aspect of the lesson planning looks specifically at the lesson's

assessment and how the educator will know that the students understood what was being

taught. This specifically applies to what desired results were identified in stage one

(McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). A lesson could have an assessment that focuses just on the

student's performance tasks, or there could be other evidence (McTighe & Wiggins,

2012). It is also important for educators to know that they are not intended to have an

assessment every day, but one that builds up throughout the unit (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). The day-to-day lessons allow students to build their knowledge of the desired outcome and then demonstrate their learning on a final assessment that allows the teacher to determine if the student understands and grasps the final concept (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012).

The last stage in developing a unit and lesson plan is to plan learning experiences. The key question the educator needs to ask during this stage is, "How will we support learners as they come to understand important ideas and processes?" (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012, p. 6). Within this stage, the teacher takes into consideration stage one goals and stage two assessment to plan meaningful and appropriate lessons to meet the needs of all students (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). See Figure 1 as a sample of what a unit/lesson plan should look like. This is from Wiggins with the essential questions embedded within the template (2005, p. 2).

Stage 1 – Desired Results

UbD Template – with question prompts

Established Goal(s): **G**
- *What relevant goals (e.g., Content Standards, Course or Program Objectives, Learning Outcomes etc.) will this design address?*

Understanding(s): **U**
Students will understand that...

- *What are the "big ideas"?*

- *What specific understandings about them are desired?*

- *What misunderstandings are predictable?*

Essential Question(s **Q**

- *What provocative questions will foster inquiry, understanding, and transfer of learning?*

Students will know... **K**

- *What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of this unit?*
- *What should they eventually be able to do as a result of such knowledge and skill?*

Students will be able to... **S**

Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence

Performance Task(s): **T**
- *Through what authentic performance task(s) will students demonstrate the desired understandings?*

- *By what criteria will "performances of understanding" be judged?*

Other Evidence: **OE**
- *Through what other evidence (e.g. quizzes, tests, academic prompts, observations, homework, journals, etc.) will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results?*

- *How will students reflect upon and self-assess their learning?*

Stage 3 – Learning Plan

Learning Activities: **L**
W= help the students know where the unit is going and what is expected? Help the teacher know where the students are coming from (prior knowledge, interests)?
H = hook all students and hold their interest?
E = equip students, help them experience the key ideas, and explore the issues?
R = provide opportunities to rethink and revise their understandings and work?
E = allow students to evaluate their work and its implications?
T = be tailored (personalized) to the different needs, interests, abilities of learners
O = be organized to maximize initial and sustained engagement as well as effective learning?

Figure 1 (Wiggins, 2005, p. 2).

Assessment

No pre-assessment is needed for EL newcomers because they had to take an entry survey prior to their enrollment in the school district. If the student is placed in the beginning stage of EL, they have little or no knowledge of the English language. There will be assessments throughout the unit as well as at the end of each unit. These assessments will be one-on-one with the teacher or another adult in the class. These will

most likely happen in the small group rotations after the whole group lesson. Quizzes will look like one of the three following:

1. While other students are doing their exit slip, I will pull the EL newcomer off to the side and give the students one of the vocabulary words for the day. I will perform the action to one of the vocabulary words and expect the student to tell me the word.

2. I will show a picture or one of the vocabulary words to the EL newcomer, and the student will respond verbally with their answer.

3. I will say a word and the EL newcomer will either show me the action or point to the correct picture.

To assess EL newcomers it is important to find this minute or two to check the students understanding of the specific words. These assessments will allow me to know if the student is grasping the concept to new vocabulary words we have covered within the unit.

Timeline

The curriculum that I designed will be introduced over a span of four weeks. I have developed four, one week unit plans. These lesson plans incorporate the use of TPR and visuals into the day-to-day curriculum that we currently use at my school. Using TPR and visuals will help all students, understand the vocabulary embedded in the lessons, especially my newcomer EL students.

Summary

Overall, allowing each student to have effective lessons to learn is crucial. Through the use of the UbD template, I will utilize Benchmark Literacy (2014) curriculum that is already in place, augmented by Total Physical Response and visuals, to

enhance the EL newcomers' learning during whole group instruction while focusing on

the research question: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies*

to adapt curriculum for teaching EL newcomers? After the creation of the lesson plans, I

will discuss the benefits, challenges and limitations, personal developments, and my

personal plan for the implementation of this curriculum.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

Throughout my research and curriculum development, I have focused on: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching English Language (EL) newcomers?* With a total of twenty different lesson plans that I adapted from Benchmark Literacy (2014), I was able to create beneficial lessons for all students, especially EL newcomers. There have been benefits, challenges and limitations, personal developments and my personal plan for implementation throughout the research, writing and adaptations.

Benefits

There were many great benefits throughout the research and modification of the curriculum. EL newcomers will be able to have vocabulary intensive lessons and teachers will have a plethora of assessment opportunities on the vocabulary words taught. I chose to use Understanding by Design (Wiggins, 2005) to guide my development of the curriculum. This curriculum allowed me to start with the standard that I wanted the students to become proficient at and work backwards to create the lesson being taught (Wiggins, 2005). I was able to pull lessons directly from Benchmark Literacy (2014) and add three vocabulary words to the beginning of each lesson. These three vocabulary words were taught through Total Physical Response (TPR) or visuals. I provided the action and visuals needed throughout all twenty lessons and I was able to provide different ways of assessing the EL newcomers within each unit. Benchmark Literacy

(2014) had great lesson plans already, which made planning and implementing of lessons easy to adapt to benefit EL newcomers.

Another great benefit of utilizing TPR and visuals in each lesson plan was that these were widely used resources and heavily research by scholarly individuals. I was able to find many individuals who not only supported the use of TPR and visuals for EL newcomers, but also those who had implemented this into their curriculum. When I was researching and reading through scholarly articles and books, it was important to find themes that were heavily researched to ensure the best possible curriculum for my students. With the research themes and the adaptation of Benchmark Literacy (2014) it is safe to say there are many benefits to this curriculum development. Throughout the research and modification of Benchmark Literacy (2014), the use of visuals and TPR will benefit all EL students, especially EL newcomers. Teachers now have curriculum that will help EL newcomers understand certain vocabulary words during instruction. Not everything was easy there were a few challenges and limitations.

Challenges and limitations

Challenges and limitations can either hinder or enhance the outcome of the product depending on the reaction to them. Throughout the research and development of the curriculum, the most challenging aspect was creating curriculum for whole group instruction that catered to the EL newcomers and the rest of class. Also, with such a narrow scope for this project, this limited the enhancement of the curriculum. There were a plethora of different aspects that would have helped all students, but focusing on vocabulary enhancement for EL newcomers limits the outcome. If I were to broaden the focus, the curriculum could have benefited more students, teachers and grade levels. I

wanted the curriculum to have some in-depth vocabulary instruction time, but not to take up the whole mini lesson. For many teachers time management is critical to getting all subjects in throughout the day. Through research and discussions with fellow EL teachers, I was able to research and implement a combination of TPR and visuals into each lesson, thus enhancing the outcome of the product. Another limitation is that all assessments are one-on-one. I know as a teacher it is hard to find time throughout every single day to continue to assess one-on-one. This is something I want to research and see if I can find alternate ways to assess EL newcomers. The enhancement of this curriculum development created personal growth and development.

Personal Developments

During the process of researching, creating, and enhancing the curriculum I learned an immense amount of information. As a researcher, I learned how to narrow my searches to only reliable and scholarly articles. Once I found reliable sources on the same topics, I was able to divide my findings into subtopics to help me write my literature review. This process of finding common themes and subtopics allowed me to write a rich and meaningful literature review. There were three specific parts of my literature review that proved most important for my capstone, the research about English language learners, TPR and visuals during whole group instruction for EL newcomers. One of the most influential aspects I learned about English language learners is that, as of 2014, over 23% of the children enrolled in school within the United States are children who are immigrants themselves or from immigrant families (Kim & Suarez-Orozco, 2014). This information takes us into the importance of finding techniques that help English language learners and newcomers learn during whole group literacy instruction. TPR is one

technique that I researched and used throughout the curriculum. James J. Asher was the creator of TPR and someone who I heavily researched. Reading articles by Asher was important for me to understand what TPR was and how to utilize it during instruction. The students act out commands that their teacher gives them to reach listening fluency (Davidheiser, 2002). The last important technique was background and knowledge on how to implement the curriculum with the use of visuals. There were many important scholars in the development of my knowledge of visuals. Serafini stated, "Being able to make sense of the world begins with making sense of visual information" (2014, p.1). Using visuals allows students to understand the vocabulary meaning. These three parts of my literature review gave me the most knowledge and understanding on how to best create and adapt the curriculum to benefit EL newcomers. This is where my personal plan was created and implemented to utilize the curriculum I have adapted from Benchmark Literacy (2014) to the best of its potential.

Personal Plan

Over the course of creating and adapting the lesson plans, there was one major aspect pushing me to implement this curriculum into my classroom. I plan on using this curriculum when I have an EL newcomer. This curriculum will benefit all students and enhance the EL newcomer's vocabulary. The simple three vocabulary words per lesson, repetition throughout the lesson, visuals and use of TPR, and the assessments provided will be effective curriculum. As I continue to research and develop my understanding of how to best teach EL newcomers, I will focus on best practices as well as interviewing and communicating with my students about what has worked for them throughout the school year. I believe feedback is a key component as well as utilizing the data I have

collected to best help my students. I plan on having those conversations with coworkers to share my findings and communicate knowledge that we both have about EL newcomers. I also plan on broadening my research to see how I can improve curriculum for other grade levels.

Conclusion

There were many benefits, challenges and limitations, personal developments, and my personal plan for implementation of the curriculum into my classroom. Throughout the research and creation of curriculum, it was important that I focused on my research question: *How can I utilize the most effective literacy instructional strategies to adapt curriculum for teaching EL newcomers?* This question helped drive my research, findings, and eagerness to continue to find better ways to help EL newcomers grow in their English language knowledge during whole group literacy lessons. There are a total of twenty lessons, five lessons from four units, which help EL newcomers grow and thrive in their homeroom classrooms. These lessons have step-by-step instructions with visuals and the explanation of the action needed during TPR for specific vocabulary words.

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