Supporting the Literacy of English Learners through Phonological Awareness Instruction

By

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Abstract

Strong literacy skills are important for all students, yet many students, including English learners, struggle to achieve literacy. The gap in reading is wide between English learners and non-English learners on standardized assessments. English learners often encounter unique challenges during literacy instruction, specifically a lack of needed prior knowledge to understand texts, limited academic vocabulary in English, a hesitancy to participate in oral conversations, and finally, limited phonological awareness. Phonological awareness is an awareness of the speech sounds of a language at all levels. It has been shown to impact both reading comprehension and writing skills. Since most native English speakers are already proficient in identifying and producing English sounds and other aspects of phonological awareness, phonological awareness instruction is rarely included in mainstream curriculum in the older grades. However, English learners continue to need explicit teaching in this area, especially those who are new to the language. English learners carry with them the sounds of their home language which will differ from English. In this paper, strategies for teaching phonological awareness will be given, as well as supports for English learners in literacy instruction, helping them to overcome the challenges previously identified. The example lesson plan included in this paper is written for a small group reading lesson which incorporates explicit teaching of short vowel sounds to increase phonological awareness. The words used to teach short vowel sounds are chosen from the same books that students will read during the lesson so that phonological awareness can be kept in an authentic context. Visuals of a mouth saying each vowel sound will help students notice the differences between sounds. The lesson will also model the use of various types of supports to increase student comprehension and oral participation.
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Overview

The desired result of this paper is that educators will be able to use the strategies presented here to develop the literacy skills of English learners (ELs). Although there are many obstacles in education for all learners, there are challenges specific to ELs in developing their literacy skills. Many teachers already address some challenges, particularly of building background knowledge, academic vocabulary, and oral language skills. This paper will identify a further challenge, the need for ELs to develop an awareness of English sounds and stress patterns. Next, a rationale will be given for incorporating phonological awareness instruction into literacy lessons as the next step for teachers to further address the needs of ELs. Then, strategies for teaching phonological awareness will be given, followed by ways to support ELs during lessons. Finally, a lesson unit will demonstrate strategies for ELs, including ways to incorporate phonological awareness instruction into a reading unit.
Introduction to Literacy Skill Development

This paper proposes strategies for developing the literacy skills of English learners (ELs). “Literacy” is defined differently based on cultural expectations and values. In some societies, literacy simply refers to the ability to read and write, the basic decoding and encoding of letters and words. However, today, Mikulecky notes that “much more complex uses of reading and writing are demanded, and consequently, the definition of basic literacy has changed to meet those demands,” (2011, p.13). Because of this change, literacy can refer to the ability to accomplish in reading or writing the academic tasks that society considers necessary, beyond basic decoding, such as making inferences and analyzing how characters change throughout a narrative text. This paper will use “literacy” to refer to both basic decoding and encoding skills, as well as the deeper thinking skills that are now valued in academics.

The Importance of Literacy Skills

Literacy instruction is important for the following reasons: (a) literacy instruction is generally more difficult than oral communication as it is not a natural part of the language learning process, (b) the gap between ELs and non-ELs in literacy has not yet closed and (c) literacy skills are important in all areas of academics and for life beyond the school setting.

The struggle for literacy. All children learn first to understand spoken language and then to speak. This oral language develops naturally, with very little formal instruction. However, learning to read and write does, almost always, require some form of instruction by another person. In short, “Speaking is a normal, innate ability; reading is not,” (Sousa, 2011, p.81). To read in one’s first language requires acquiring vocabulary through listening to conversations and by using new words when speaking, practicing pronunciation in the process. Students might not receive enough support in literacy because their social language, or
conversational language, is well developed. Often, ELs acquire social language with speaking and listening skills in English before they develop literacy skills, causing teachers to incorrectly assume that students are more advanced in English proficiency than the reality. Reading and writing are often developed more slowly and with explicit instruction. One reason that the English alphabetic writing system is difficult is because of how little correspondence there is between some letters and sounds. Sousa (2011, p.83) counts more than 1,100 different ways of spelling forty-four English phonemes. Reading and writing in English can be a daunting task for English learners. Reading is one of the hardest tasks a young person tackles in education. Students need support to develop the advanced language skills necessary for proficiency in literacy.

The gap in literacy skills. According to results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in both math and reading, “gaps in achievement between (ELs) and (non-ELs) have remained stubbornly unchanged” from 2005 to 2009 (NCES, 2009; Perie et al., 2005, cited in Sousa, 2011, p.2). Gaps between ELs and non-ELs can be seen by looking at both percentages and scale scores of students. Table 1 shows the percentage of students “at or above the basic achievement level” in either mathematics or reading, according to the NAEP Reading Report Card and NAEP Mathematics Report Card (NCES, 2009). The importance of literacy instruction for ELs is made extremely clear in the results of these report cards. From 2005 to 2017, though gaps may be slightly narrowing at times, it remains true that the gap between achievement for ELs and Non-ELs is larger in reading than it is in math, in both grade levels. Also, it is consistently true that the gap in percentages is more significant for eighth graders than for fourth graders, suggesting that the longer student literacy skills are neglected, the more entrenched the illiteracy becomes and the more difficulty learners face to attain literacy.
Table 1 Achievement of Students "at or above Basic-Level Reading" Mathematics and Reading NAEP—Grades 4 and 8. (Adapted from Perie, et al., 2005; OELA, 2015; NAEP Reading Report Card; NAEP Mathematics Report Card)

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Test scores for ELs continued to be lower than non-ELs when looking at scale scores on the 2013 reading and math NAEP assessments (OELA, 2015; Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017). According to the Office of English Language Acquisition (OELA, 2015, p.2) on the 2013 reading NAEP assessment, “The gap in reading scale scores between ELs and non-ELs widened by grade, from 39 points in grade 4, to 45 points in grade 8, and to 53 points in grade 12.” The trend was also true for the 2013 mathematics NAEP assessment, as the gap between the two groups also “widened by grade, from 25 points in grade 4, to 41 points in grade 8, and to 46 points in grade 12.” Considering both percentage of students at a certain level of proficiency (at least “Basic”) and the average scale scores of students, there is a gap in literacy proficiency between ELs and non-ELs in the upper elementary, middle, and high school grades.

The NAEP assessment data makes it clear that ELs struggle more with literacy than do non-ELs. On one hand, this gap includes scores from ELs at all different language levels.
Students in Wisconsin are required to take all sessions of the Forward Exam including English Language Arts (ELA), after only one year of education in the United States (Wisconsin DPI, 2018-9, p.23). One year is simply not enough time for students who are new ELs to be at grade level in reading. Data shows evidence of a gap, and that either students need more time to become proficient in English or they are not becoming proficient. ELs need instruction that fits their specific needs to help them close this gap as quickly as possible.

**The need for literacy.** Students need to be able to be fluent readers and accurate writers, but they also need to be critical thinkers and thoughtful communicators. Students need to develop their English skills, including phonological awareness, to help them communicate orally with others. Then, the benefits of phonological awareness instruction in literacy will allow students greater independence and opportunities in life. They will need to be able to write cover letters for job applications and to think critically about proposals such as school referendums affecting their communities. The importance of literacy skills for students including the English language development to reach literacy extend beyond the school years to impact the lives of future community members and leaders.

Because of the difficulty that literacy development presents for all students, the overall gap in academic achievement between a great portion of ELs and non-ELs, and the importance of literacy instruction in education and in life beyond high school, a discussion of teaching strategies for ELs in literacy development is appropriate and even necessary.

**Specific Challenges for English Learners**

It is difficult to pinpoint one particular reason why ELs are not scoring as highly in reading on standardized tests such as the NAEP. Is it because of their limited English proficiency, or because of other factors such as having different cultural experiences, limited
background knowledge, or limited previous instruction? The answer is likely “yes” to all of these reasons. Perhaps teachers are unaware of the specific challenges that ELs face or of instructional strategies that would be most effective for these learners in the classroom and in preparation for standardized tests.

English learners bring with them to the classroom a great depth of knowledge and experiences. The educational backgrounds and life experiences of these students are vastly different, yet all of these students are considered “English learners.” The diversity of ELs may be a growth opportunity for teachers as they learn more and more about the various strengths and needs of their students. Mikulecky (2011) leans on the findings of many educational researchers in order to create a list of ten actions that ELs need to do in order to read well in English (p.17). She then consolidates the list into four components that should be included regularly into literacy instruction (p.17-18). The components are the following:

- **Substantial amounts of extensive reading for pleasure, with opportunities for talking about their books with people who can model the literate skills required in English-language contents.** (reading engagement, background knowledge, oral language use, modeling)

- **Focused, interactive lessons on specific reading skills, with opportunities for students to explain their thinking and direct instruction on applying the skills strategically to a variety of texts.** (oral language use, vocabulary of reading skills, explicit instruction, interaction)

- **Decoding and vocabulary learning activities that include direct instruction in the phonemes of English and high frequency words, multiple opportunities for exposure to and manipulation of target words, and guidelines for individual vocabulary learning.** (explicit instruction of phonological awareness skills for decoding, vocabulary learning, multiple exposures)

- **Training and repeated practice in fluency development: skimming, scanning, previewing, and reading rate improvement.** (Previewing will be taught in the sample lesson unit.)
As these points make clear, oral communication skills are important for cultivating literacy and phonological awareness (PA) not only supports oral communication, but also is a key tool for decoding texts. Any attempt to develop literacy that hopes to be successful must incorporate these components as well. This paper will incorporate components such as explicit teaching and vocabulary instruction, though they will not be the focus of this paper. Phonological awareness (PA), an aspect of pronunciation, is both a challenge for students, as well as a key for success in literacy. Other challenges identified by teachers and researchers include vocabulary development, background knowledge, and oral participation in classroom learning.

**Vocabulary.** English learners face many challenges and have specific needs when it comes to learning vocabulary. First, they need to learn an enormous number of words with little to no time in the classroom to learn them. According to data collected by Nagy and Anderson (1984, cited in Graves, 2013, p.13), between third and twelfth grade, students learn about 3,000 words per year. By twelfth grade, students have approximately 40,000 words in their reading vocabularies. These calculations include word families and not “idioms, other multi-word units, multiple meanings, or proper nouns, which would raise the figure considerably” to approximately 50,000 words by twelfth grade. These calculations, however, are based on the vocabulary growth of native speakers of English. For English learners, their vocabulary knowledge greatly depends on their literacy development in their native language and their English language proficiency (Graves, 2013, p.13). The sheer number of words that English learners may need to add to their reading vocabulary is indeed a great challenge. There are too many words to explicitly teach all of them to students, and yet ELs likely need to learn more words per year than native speakers. Once students do start to learn words, those word needs to be retained in long-term memory. Word retention over time is difficult because the number of
new words actually used day to day is limited (Ortega, 2009). Helping students bridge this gap in the limited amount of instructional time available should be an important goal for literacy development.

**Background knowledge.** Another challenge for English learners specifically is a lack of background knowledge needed for the specific pieces of literature with which students are expected to engage. All students bring with them unique experiences and skill sets that can be an asset to them in the classroom. However, English learners may not have the same cultural experiences that are portrayed in literature. Some ELs may be new to the U.S. school system, and may also be students with limited or interrupted former education (SLIFE, DeCapua & Marshall, 2010). They may not have been exposed to the same content material as their grade-level peers, making it more difficult for them to understand content material simply because of a lack of needed background knowledge for a particular cultural or academic context. Sousa (2011) says that a lack of background knowledge, limited prior education (SLIFE), and cultural differences can all present obstacles to reading comprehension (p.90).

Not only is background knowledge important for the day-to-day learning in the classroom, but it is also important for teachers and administrators to consider when administering assessments. For example, in math word problems English learners face the challenge of understanding the contexts given for many problems, such as shoveling snow or mixing up pancakes. English learners may not have experienced either of those activities. Although students who are ELs, and all children, bring with them significant experiences that should be valued and shared in the classroom, these tend to be overlooked and background knowledge necessary for comprehending information remains inaccessible. An effective instructional approach must
understand and respect student background knowledge and use it to cultivate these understandings of American culture.

**Oral participation.** According to a study by Arreaga-Mayer and Perdomo-Rivera (1996, cited in Zwiers, & Crawford, 2011), ELs “spend only 4 percent of the school day engaged in school talk and 2 percent of the day discussing focal content of the lesson.” Hopefully, the percentage has increased since the research report was conducted. Regardless of the date, however, the data shows that ELs have struggled with classroom participation. Reasons for a lack of participation include anxiety in making language mistakes (such as in phonological awareness or vocabulary), causing ELs to feel isolated from their peers.

One reason for the lack of participation by ELs is learner anxiety of making mistakes in speaking English, also leading to social isolation. ELs feel more anxiety in the classroom because of their perceived differences from their peers, both culturally and linguistically. According to the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1959; Sheriff, 1966, in Bresnahan, et. al., 2002), members of a group feel a strong sense of social identity, so that comparing their group with others causes members to have negative attitudes towards those who are on the outside. Even when they are with members of other groups, they think of themselves as they are defined by their own group and favor those who are of the same group. Talmy (2009) describes the sentiments of students at Tradewinds High School ESL class in Hawaii and the stigmatism with being a new, foreign student fresh off the boat (FOB). Students considered FOB were not part of the “in” group, but the “out” group. Those who were different, or had “marked identities” were distinguished by their “marked language” or linguistic structures that differed from the mainstream. Students were categorized by their language abilities, comparing them to the standard native speaker. Even within the ESL classroom, students marked one another and tried
to associate themselves with the “in” group to avoid the FOB stigma. The social pressures of high school may push students to want to be part of the “in” group by improving their pronunciation. Whether or not this is correct or healthy for students, it is often the reality they face. Accented speech contributes to anxiety, especially if the classroom atmosphere is not accepting of differences in speech. Many second language learners worry about their accents, which can be a source of great anxiety for some. When students are embarrassed, then oral participation suffers.

In one study, Bown and White (2010) found that emotions were also closely tied to social relationships. Negative relationships with peers can lead to anxiety, but building positive relationships with monolingual students (or other ELs of a different cultural background) may be difficult. According to the social identity theory (Tajfel, 1959; Sheriff, 1966, in Bresnahan, et. al., 2002), members of a group feel a strong sense of social identity, so that comparing their group with others causes members to have negative attitudes towards those who are on the outside. Even when they are with members of other groups, they think of themselves as they are defined by their own group and favor those who are of the same group. However, positive relationships with other students and with the teacher can help lower anxiety and allow students to learn.

Participating in classroom discussions is important for language building, leading to literacy development. However, participating means risk taking in different ways for ELs than for native English students. ELs take on a difficult challenge in participating in literacy-based conversations, especially if oral language supports, including phonological awareness instruction, are not in place.
**Phonological awareness (PA).** The principle difference between English learners and students who are non-English learners is the fact that ELs are *not* monolingual, and as such, they carry with them the speech sounds and sound categorization rules of a language besides English. This is especially true if ELs are sequential learners, or learners that start learning a second language after their first language is already mostly established (Tabors, 1997; Berken, et al., 2016). Students who grow up in another country and then begin learning English in the U.S. would be considered sequential learners. Not only are the speech sounds of their first language already set before being introduced to the English sound system, but sounds not in their native language are often filtered out by their minds as irrelevant noise, making it difficult for them to distinguish some consonants and vowels. Since phonemic awareness includes being able to identify (perceive) the speech sounds of English, then instruction in speech sounds for those who do not yet have a strong grasp of English phonology would be a unique need of English learners that would be helpful to literacy development at all ages. However, literacy instruction in the upper elementary grades and beyond often does not include teaching the building blocks of literacy, such as identifying and producing letter sounds, because children are expected to already have mastered this skill. However, for ELs who are newcomers or who have a very different sound system in their home language, this aspect of phonological awareness is often necessary to explicitly instruct. A discussion of strategies for teaching sound identification will be presented in the next section of this paper, after describing phonological awareness and its impact on literacy development.

**Phonological Awareness for Literacy Development**

When learning another language, recognizing the phonology of the language is one of the first, basic building blocks for oracy and literacy. Moats (2005) and Lems, et al. (2010) both
describe phonology in terms of a rule system governing the individual sounds (phonemes) of a language. A meta-linguistic awareness of this sound system is what Moats (2005) terms phonological awareness (PA). It includes the speech sound system at all levels, according to her definition, including stress patterns, word boundaries, onset-rime units, and phonemes. Thus, in this sense, it is a more overarching term than both phonemic awareness and phonics. Phonemic awareness is more specific than phonological awareness, according to definitions by Moats (2005) and the National Reading Panel (NRP, 2002). It is specific to the smallest sound units of language, excluding other features such as stress patterns. For this reason, this paper uses the broader term of phonological awareness (PA). Research conducted by the NRP focused on phonemic awareness specifically. Since it is also part of PA, results are still very relevant, as the example lesson plan focuses on PA instruction of short vowel sounds. Instruction in the sounds (phonemes) of a language that also shows the relationship of sounds to letters is phonics instruction (Pinnell & Fountas, 2003, p.14-15).

Phonological awareness (PA) skills include both segmental and suprasegmental features. Moats (2005, p.12) describes syllables as “units of speech organized around a vowel sound that can include consonants before or after the vowel.” Students must be able to break words into syllable parts. Moats suggests students also must be able to identify the onset-rime units that make up syllables. “Onset,” according to Moats, refers to the consonants before the vowel, and “rime” includes the vowel and any other consonants after the vowel within the syllable (p.12). Then, students also need to learn suprasegmental features, such as sentence and word stress, rhythm, and intonation. Table 2 compares Phonological skills identified by Moats (2005) and Pinnell & Fountas (2003). Both are helpful in understanding the PA skills that learners need to develop.
Literacy development for ELs needs to help develop PA skills that students are missing.

The next section will support the need for a proper foundation in PA in order to support the literacy development of ELs.

**The Relationship of Phonological Awareness (PA) to Literacy Development**

Phonological awareness serves to support English learner development of literacy skills in at least three ways: (a) first, better intelligibility in their productive skills helps to reduce their anxiety and increase their ability to participate orally in English, supporting their general literacy development; (b) next, phonological awareness supports their ability to make use of phonics and other literacy development strategies; and (c) managing polysyllabic words requires
understanding of English stress and rhythm, so phonological awareness is an important tool for the development of literacy skills.

**Phonological awareness for intelligibility and increased oral participation.** According to Zwiers and Crawford (2011), conversations can build language and literacy. They may also be beneficial for cognition, content learning, and for building social, cultural, and psychological skills. Conversation builds academic language, vocabulary, literacy skills, oral language and communication skills, critical thinking skills, and more (Zwiers & Crawford, 2011, p.111-125). See section four for specific strategies for building students’ oral language.

Teaching specific features of PA can increase students’ intelligibility, or how well their speaking is understood by others. Better intelligibility in students’ productive skills helps to reduce their anxiety and increase their ability to participate orally in English, supporting their general language development. Munro and Derwing (2005) suggest that teachers and pronunciation curriculum should focus on improving specific forms of language that cause the most difficulty in comprehensibility, instead of broadly trying to reduce all foreign-accented speech. Although differences between a student’s first language and English will often limit comprehensibility, phonological and phonetic features can preserve “mutual intelligibility,” such features include, according to Nation and Newton (2009, p.77), “consonant sounds with some provisos, initial consonant clusters, and the distinction between long and short vowels, and the placement of contrastive stress.” The example lesson unit below (see p. 36) includes instruction in short vowel sounds and word stress in order to build students’ comprehensibility so that they feel more comfortable participating in classroom conversations about texts. Focusing on vowel sounds will also help improve their phonics.
**PA and basic literacy skills.** Although oracy helps to develop language and literacy, oracy alone is not enough for ELs to develop proficiency in reading. Moats states that, “Phoneme awareness is the subskill of phonology that is most closely related to reading and spelling. Learning to decode an alphabetic writing system with phonics requires phoneme awareness. McEwan (2002) lists several studies that have investigated the effects of phonemic awareness instruction on literacy. These studies “report positive effects on reading, spelling, and phonological development, not only for at-risk students, but also for normal achievers” (McEwan, 2002). Lems, et.al (2010) notes that ELs at any age or grade level must go through the same process as native English speakers when learning to read and write in English, depending on when they start learning English. “Phonics skills are critical to cracking the code for reading English and must be accounted for in any comprehensive instructional program (p.66). The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) published a review of articles evaluating the effect size of phonemic awareness and reading development and spelling skills. This report shows key findings of research on phonemic awareness instruction PA1. The “tasks” for assessment and instruction of phonemic awareness given by the NRP include phoneme isolation, identity of sounds, categorization, blending, segmentation, and deletion. These tasks are basically the same as what Moats (2005) and Pinnel and Fountas (2003) recommended in Table 2 above. The NRP also compared effect sizes for variations of phonemic awareness instruction, and evaluated the design features of variations with strong effects. The effect size for instruction was large at 0.86, higher than reading or spelling. Though effect sizes were all moderate or large, “effect sizes were larger when children received focused and explicit instruction on one or two PA skills than when

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1 *Note: The NRP uses PA for phonemic awareness, in contrast to the author of this paper designating PA for phonological awareness. However, phonemic awareness is one aspect of PA instruction.*
they were taught a combination of three or more PA skills.” Furthermore, the NRP found more significance when PA instruction included the use of alphabet letters to manipulate phonemes at some point in instruction, versus PA instruction without the use of letters. (NRP, 2000; Schuele & Boudreau, 2008, p.7). The effects of phonemic awareness instruction on reading development (0.53) and on writing (0.59) were both moderate and that the benefit of instruction was maintained past the end of training. Those who benefitted the most from instruction were students in kindergarten and first grade, especially students who were “at risk for future reading problems.” Phonemic Awareness instruction was effective for students of all levels of SES and learning in other languages as well as in English. However, PA was not effective for “improving spelling in disabled readers.” Considering ELs, there are other factors that may affect their writing as well. Learners who are literate in their first language carry with them what they know of the writing system, or orthographic system, of that language. “Learning how to use the English writing system may be facilitated or impeded by prior experience with a different orthography” (Lems, 2010, p.67, 86), just as the sound system of their first language may impact the learning of English phonology.

**PA and polysyllabic words: English stress and syllable identification.** Managing to read and write polysyllabic words requires an understanding of English word stress and an understanding of syllables, so phonemic awareness is an important tool for ELs in literacy development. According to a study by Mehta, Ding, Ness, and Chen, “Word stress explained unique variance in both word reading and conventional spelling, highlighting the importance of addressing phonological awareness at the supra-segmental level,” (2017). Researchers Jarmulowicz, Taran, and Seek, (2012) found that stress accuracy and reading measures were consistently related for both speakers of what they call “mainstream” American English and
speakers of “non-mainstream” varieties of English, specifically African American English and Southern American English. Teaching word stress, then, has been shown to improve decoding and spelling skills.

Prominence, or word stress, is also important when communicating meaning. Word stress occurs when one syllable of a word is lengthened and the pitch is moved either up or down, (Goodwin, 2001). The rules of suprasegmental features are unique in each language. Languages like French and Japanese, pronounce each syllable with the same amount of emphasis or force. English, however, puts this force (stress) on only some syllables, one per word (Sousa, 2011). If the incorrect syllable of a word is stressed, it can be difficult for listeners to understand the message, and the speaker might use a meaning of the word that was not intended. For example, words like “conduct,” “object,” and “present” can be either nouns or verbs, depending on the context of the sentence and whether the first or the second syllable is stressed (Sousa, 2011, p.74). Sentence stress is also important in communicating meaning, but it is less directly connected to polysyllabic words and literacy, except for its role in oral communication. Understanding sentence stress is most beneficial for students in developing their listening and speaking skills, which has been shown to contribute to literacy. Stressing some words in a sentence means that the words are said louder, while other words are said softer. Adding stress to certain words adds importance and can change the explicit or implied meaning of a sentence. Sentence stress also “is a main contributor to the prosody of English, especially its rhythm (Sousa, 2011, p.63). Thus, understanding both sentence and word stress is beneficial for ELs, though word stress is more directly connected to literacy.
Specific Instructional Needs in Phonological Awareness Instruction

The same research review conducted by the NRP (2000) cited above gives a few key instructional points to include in any PA intervention:

1. Explicit, systematic instruction with modeling
2. Scaffolding student learning
3. Following an order of instruction
4. Teaching a small group
5. Using letters with instruction

This paper will focus on the need for explicit instruction with clear modeling, as well as the importance of using strategies that bring about students’ noticing of phonological features. Ways to scaffold student learning (including using a specific order of instruction to support students) will be given starting on page 27.

Explicit instruction with modeling. Most scholars today would say that there is at least some benefit to explicit language instruction, including in PA. Several researchers have included “explicit instruction” as an important component of PA instruction (Wanzek et al., 2002; Schuele & Boudreau, 2008; Quiroga et al. 2002). How does explicit instruction in PA look? Schuele & Boudreau (2008) highlight the importance of teaching that is separate from “testing,” but teaching in a way that models clearly and repeatedly, “the process in which one ‘solves’ phonological tasks with an appropriate level of support for each child. Simply providing the correct answer or saying an answer is incorrect (testing) will not help the child learn. Instead, “Only feedback and scaffolding—teaching—will help the child figure out how to get to the right answer (Schneider & Watkins, 1996; Ukrainetz, 2006, cited in Schule & Boudreau, 2008).

Schuele & Boudreau (2008) list ways to teach different facets of PA (See Table 3). In this framework, the teacher plans the steps of instruction: modeling, leading, and testing (Wanzek, et al., 2000, cited in Schuele & Boudreau (2008). Table 3 shows types of models for teachers to choose from when teaching students to hear phonemes, such as the short “i” sound in the sample
lesson unit. Some of the sample lessons include warm up activities designed to help students perceive and produce vowel sounds. It will mostly use the “model only” and the “model-lead” type of models from Table 3. An example of “model only” dialogue is included in the example lesson plan in the “Word Study Warm-up” section of Lesson 2 and Lesson 3.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Models</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model only</strong></td>
<td>Listen to the word _____. The first sound in ___ is ___.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model - Lead</strong></td>
<td>Listen to the word _____. The first sound in ___ is ___. Say the first sound in ____ with me, ___..</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model - Lead - Test</strong></td>
<td>Listen to the word _____. The first sound in ___ is ___. Say the first sound in ____ with me, ___. What’s the first sound in ____? ___(Answer)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Model - Test</strong></td>
<td>Listen to the word _____. The first sound in ___ is ___. What’s the first sound in ______? ___(Answer)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Explicit instruction of suprasegmental features includes teaching word stress, sentence stress (contributing to prosody and rhythm), and intonation (Sousa, 2011). Intonation can be difficult to teach, as it is very challenging for learners to “hear ‘tunes’ or to identify the different patterns of rising and falling tones.” Though it can be difficult to teach intonation, or many aspects of pronunciation, Harmer (nd.) notes that the key to pronunciation teaching is less about “getting students to produce correct sounds or intonation patterns, but rather to have them listen and notice how English is spoken… The more aware they are, the greater the change that their own intelligibility levels will rise” (p.250). Teaching pronunciation should be student focused, helping them both perceive sounds and to produce sounds, though perhaps with greater focus on
perceiving features that are most difficult for them. Instruction should be limited to a few key features that are made explicit for learners with clear, supportive modeling.

**Noticing phonological features.** Strategies for teaching segmental and suprasegmental features include making students more aware of correct and incorrect interpretations of speech productions. According to Richard Schmidt, “noticing” is focusing conscious attention through both detected and controlled activation of input (Schmidt, 1995 cited in Ortega, 2009, p. 95). Noticing can be prompted from either internal or external factors. For example, if learners discover something new when trying to form language, they notice from within themselves, or through their own promptings. One way to do this is to pretend to believe the incorrect pronunciation of a minimal pair and use humor to help students realize the mispronunciation. For example, if a student says, “I need more *ships,*” instead of, “I need more *chips,*” pretend that you believe the student really wants more ships. Respond, “Ships? Why do you need more ships?” and communicate with a confused look and a quick sketch of a ship. Students will then realize their mistake and correct themselves to help you understand. Hopefully they will also sense your humor.

**Strategies Addressing Instructional Needs in Phonological Awareness**

Strategies addressing the needs of ELs must support explicit instruction and facilitate students’ noticing. A lesson given by a teacher that highlights a particular form that the learners then notice is an example of noticing. Ways of helping students notice phonological features may include the following: (a) showing the place of articulation with diagrams and by feeling vibrations, (b) discriminating between similar sounds using activities with minimal pairs (c) demonstrating stress and intonation patterns with materials and movement.
Teaching the place of articulation: Diagrams and vibrations. Diagrams can be helpful to show the place of articulation, or the placement of the tongue, lips, and jaw when producing different sounds. There are several online resources that teachers can use if they would like to use one of these charts with students, or they could draw their own (Figure 1: Margolis, 2019). Using pictures of mouth positions and a mirror so students can see their own movements can be especially helpful for teaching vowels. The sample lesson unit refers to the chart in Appendix C: Vowel Ladder. The ladder is a free document created by Kim Fricke, available online at TeachersPayTeachers.com. This chart explicitly teaches jaw positions for specific vowel sounds, and it also shows how the tongue moves from the back of the mouth towards the front as the jaw is lowered. The descriptions on the chart may be an oversimplification of the matter for teachers, but it is very child friendly. Another option for teaching place of articulation is to use a mirror as students say different sounds. A mirror is especially helpful to teach students how to pronounce “th” sounds. They can see their tongue slightly sticking out between their teeth. Demonstrate for them and have them make the sound with you. Feeling sound vibrations is another way to help students notice various sounds, such as “th.” Students place their hand on their throat to feel the vibration for the /ð/ sound and the lack of vibration for the /θ/ sound. If students have trouble with this, introduce the concept by having them feel their throat while producing other voiced sounds. The pair /s/ and /z/ works well if they can pronounce both. Feeling sound vibrations is a good strategy for teaching many voiced and voiceless consonant pairs, such as “s” and “z,” “p” and “b,” “k” and “g,” “f” and “v,” and also “t” and “d.”
Teaching sound discrimination: Minimal pair activities. Minimal pairs are words that sound the same except for one key sound. When teaching students to distinguish two sounds as significant for meaning in a new language, minimal pair work can help learners identify two different sounds that may not have been previously distinguishable. Sounds that are often difficult for various groups of ELs include /l/-/r/, /ð/ and /θ/ (the two sounds spelled as “th” in English, as in “this” (/ð/) and “threw” (/θ/)), as well as short and long vowel sounds. Strategies to help teach minimal pairs are listed below. Unless otherwise indicated, the strategies below are from the website Dave’s ESL Café: Pronunciation (Sperling, 2016). There are activities that are specific to certain minimal pairs, or activities that are more general that can be applied to work with different sounds.

- **The telephone game (Chinese whispers).** First, have them form a line. Choose minimal pair words beforehand and write sentences with them. Whisper in the first person’s ear, and have them whisper the phrase to the next person in line. The last person in line should announce to everyone what the phrase was to see if it matches what the initial words or phrase was.

- **Exaggeration is the key.** Teach the place of articulation using visuals, but also have the learners practice exaggerated pronunciation to help learners produce the sounds. An
activity for learning /l/ is to have students emphasize flicking their tongue forward as they say “LA LA LA.” For /r/, have them work with jaw placement by pretending to lower it like a bullfrog. They could roar like a lion or bark like a dog to really focus on this sound.

- **Tongue twisters.** Students could read tongue twisters that include minimal pair sounds, analyzing them for the different sounds. For example, when teaching the voiced and voiceless “th” sounds, students could color the /ð/ sound ("th" like “the”) green for “go, use the voice,” and the /θ/ sound ("th" like “threw”) red, as in “stop the voice.” Students then read the words. Students could also write their own sentences using the words from the list below:

  - thank - tank
  - three - tree
  - through - true
  - thin - tin
  - bath - bat
  - both - boat
  - math - mat
  - tenth - tent
  - think - sink
  - thing - sing
  - mouth - mouse
  - thin – sin

- **Four corners.** First, choose between four to six pairs of words that work on one minimal pair, like long “a” and short “a”. Write them on the board and have students listen and pronounce the words. Number the words so that you can play four corners (or use up to six areas in the room) with the words. Students choose one of the six areas to go to. Roll a die, then say the word that corresponds with that number. Students must decide which word was said, then students in the area labeled with that number should say the word and number. Students at that area eliminated from the game for that round, and everyone else can go to a different area. The last person remaining wins the game. Those who have been eliminated can take turns announcing the word that corresponds with the number on the die for each roll.

**Teaching word stress and intonation: Materials and movement.** Word stress and intonation are best taught with movement, sound, and visuals. First, teach the concept of
word stress by clapping the dominant stresses in words. Next, show that the stress in compound nouns like “pencil sharpener” is only on “pencil” by clapping and also showing the falling tone with the hand in the air while saying the word. After the teacher models, students should then say and do the actions along with the teacher. More strategies for teaching word stress and intonation include the following:

- **Memory.** Print pictures and labels separately for several compound nouns, such as “bus stop,” and “haircut.” Play a matching memory game by turning each picture and matching word over, spread out on the table. Have the learner turn over two pieces of paper at a time and practice saying words as they try to find the word/picture pairs.

- **Read and search.** Find a story that uses several compounds in it. Take turns reading the story with the student. Identify the compound nouns and give feedback on how the student stresses the words.

- **Apps for Pronunciation Practice** (Vogt, Echevarría, & Washam, 2015, p.71-72). This strategy could be used for any aspect of phonological awareness. Students would need an electronic device such as a smart phone, computer, or tablet that can record and play back their voice. Students will practice using new vocabulary words when they talk, trying to pronounce the words correctly. The activity could be done to practice saying homographs with different stressed syllables (*SUSpect* and *susPECT*). Teachers should model appropriate and inappropriate behavior. Students should *not* record words that are not on their vocabulary lists. They should be supportive of their peers. The teacher sets a timer for about 5 minutes and allows students to record the first word on the list. Then, students play their recording for the group. If it is possible to change the voice setting, the teacher or a student could call out which voice setting to use (echo, haunting, etc.). Repeat the
steps with all of the words. At the end, students could save their pronunciation recordings. Select some volunteers to share their recordings with the class.

Phonological awareness instruction for ELs must include explicit instruction with modeling and noticing of the specific features taught in the lesson. Various strategies for teaching PA are listed above according to the goal: teaching the suprasegmental feature of word stress, teaching sound discrimination with minimal pairs, and teaching place or manner of articulation. Other instructional needs discussed in the next section include appropriate scaffolds for students, particularly when incorporating PA instruction with literacy lessons.

**Supporting Student Success**

Although some (WIDA, 2012) distinguish between “scaffolds” and “supports” as different ways to differentiate instruction or language for students, it is not always the case. Gibbons defines a scaffold in a more general sense, as a support that a teacher gives to a student temporarily, enabling the student to accomplish a task that would not be possible to independently, (Gibbons, 2015, cited in Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017, p.60). In this paper, “supports” and “scaffolds” will be used interchangeably as the general sense of the word given by Gibbons (2015) above. Scaffolds and supports are descriptions for ways that teachers give students access to both academic information and the language to understand and participate in academics.

This section will give strategies to support ELs in mainstream literacy classes that teach both language and literacy together. Literacy instruction of ELs must include effective instructional supports that fit into the classroom context of today. This paper has given challenges for ELs in building literacy skills, though these challenges ultimately limit students’ ability to access literacy instruction. Teachers need to make content (reading and writing
strategies) comprehensible for students by scaffolding instruction. They should also address challenges to literacy besides phonological awareness, including ways for students to build background knowledge, oral language, and academic vocabulary.

**Comprehensible Content through Scaffolding**

One of the ways to make content comprehensible is by differentiating instruction. WIDA (2012) describes differentiation as an approach used by teachers to make content both comprehensible and challenging for all learners. Differentiation needs to be done carefully so that students are still expected to meet the same content standards. The language load is reduced, however, according to students’ language levels. Some tips for differentiating for multi-level classes (adapted from Echevarría, Vogt, & Short, 2014, p.49) is as follows:

- **Use differentiated sentence starters.** Choose them based on the essential question of the lesson. Write comprehension questions that vary in difficulty. Change questions into sentence starters to help begin a response.

- **Use leveled study guides.** Write study guides that challenge advanced learners while expanding their knowledge. For students who struggle, review key concepts. Give students simplified summaries of important texts. Provide key definitions and tips to help lead students through a text.

- **Use highlighted text.** To lessen the reading load for struggling readers, consider highlighting important information in grade level texts, such as “overriding ideas, key concepts, topic sentences, important vocabulary, and summary statements,” (p.50).

- **Plan the instructional sequence.** The order of instruction should be planned carefully so as to build from basic, foundational concepts, to more complex
concepts, or from easier to more difficult tasks. Doing so supports the learning of students, though the teacher is also involved in making sure students are successful at each level of instruction. Figure 2 shows a sample writing scaffold for a literary essay about a realistic fiction book. The sequence of instruction is that first, the teacher models using an organizer like Figure 2. Then, the teacher and the students write at least one literary essay together. Finally, students should write an essay on their own, using the same form. Eventually, the form can be removed, and students should write without any supports.

**Figure 2: Sample Support for Literacy Essay Writing**

![Sample Support for Literacy Essay Writing](image)

**Types of Supports.** Differentiation should use different types of supports, thinking about which of the supports of any one type are appropriate for students at a particular language level. WIDA (2013, p.49-50), suggests three types of supports for students: graphic supports, sensory supports, and interactive supports, as presented in Figure 3.
Figure 3: Types of Instructional Supports (Adapted from WIDA, 2013, p.50)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sensory Supports</th>
<th>Graphic Supports</th>
<th>Interactive Supports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real-life objects (realia)</td>
<td>Charts</td>
<td>With mentors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manipulatives</td>
<td>Number lines</td>
<td>In pairs or partners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pictures &amp; photographs</td>
<td>Graphic organizers</td>
<td>In triads or small groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Models &amp; figures</td>
<td>Tables</td>
<td>In a whole group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illustrations, diagrams, &amp; drawings</td>
<td>Graphs</td>
<td>Using cooperative group structures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Magazines &amp; newspapers</td>
<td>Timelines</td>
<td>With the internet (websites) or software programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical activities</td>
<td></td>
<td>In the native language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videos &amp; films</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broadcasts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Presenters at workshops often suggest that teachers use a combination of these different types of supports throughout a lesson. One support will not fit every situation or every student need. Often, supports are stacked together to best support students. In the Lesson 1 of the example lesson unit, students watch a video to build vocabulary and background knowledge, they use a graphic organizer of a concept map to organize their thinking, and they share their thinking in pairs or in a small group.

The supports students should receive will depend on the language level of the learner for in their speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Table 4 shows how Staehr Fenner and Snyder (2017) designated various supports as appropriate for students at a certain language level. It Students at lower levels should receive some supports that are not appropriate as a consistent support for those at higher levels, or closer to a “Level 5” based on WIDA language levels (WIDA, 2016). A support often listed for beginning learners is to communicate in their first language. Although it will not always be possible for teachers to communicate with the student
in his or her first language, another adult or peer may be able to help. Teachers could ask students to create a bilingual word list with their parents. If there is no one who speaks the same language as the student in the moment of instruction, that student still may benefit from rehearsing orally by themselves in their home language, or by using a bilingual word list. Bilingual instruction is not always possible, yet there is some evidence that there is a correlation between PA in Spanish and in English for bilingual learners (Quiroga et al., 2002).

Table 4: Supports for Instruction by Language Level (adapted from Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017, p.72)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Supports for Instruction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Beginning**            | • Access to text, video, and/or instructions in home language, as well as in English  
                           • Sentence frames to help ELs respond to text-dependent questions posed throughout the lesson  
                           • Word walls and word banks  
                           • Reduced linguistic load for language of instruction |
| **Intermediate**         | • Access to text, video, and/or instructions in home language, as well as in English, as appropriate  
                           • Sentence stems  
                           • Word walls and banks |
| **Advanced**             | • Concise background knowledge  
                           • Pre-taught vocabulary  
                           • Graphic organizers  
                           • Glossaries  
                           • Dictionaries  
                           • Repetition, paraphrasing, and modeling  
                           Pair and small-group work |
| (Good for all levels)    |                          |
Addressing further challenges: Academic Vocabulary

Students need to learn and use academic language, including academic vocabulary. Academic language is how students “access and engage with the school curriculum,” (Bailey, 2007, p.12). For English learners, their vocabulary knowledge greatly depends on their literacy development in their native language and their English language proficiency (Graves, 2013, p.13). With the number of words that students need to learn, teachers need to be strategic about which words to focus on for explicit instruction.

One way to help teachers determine which academic words to teach might be to refer to the three “tiers” of vocabulary (See Table 5). Tier 1 words are general words used in social language, learned through daily interactions. These words are important when building students’ background knowledge for a particular text, even if they are not considered academic vocabulary. Tier 2 and Tier 3 words are both considered academic vocabulary. Tier 2 words appear across multiple disciplines and could have multiple meanings. These words should be the bulk of explicit instruction. Tier 3 words are domain specific words used in a specific content area. These words are often most challenging, limited in meaning, and important for comprehension of specific content (Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017, p. 118-119). Focusing on teaching Tier II and Tier III words should help students learn academic language in a variety of contexts for a variety of purposes (Beck, McKeown, and Kucan, 2002, cited in Staehr Fenner & Snyder, 2017, p.118). For example, teaching reading comprehension strategies requires specific teaching of academic vocabulary, such as main idea, cause, effect, inference, and summarize. These academic terms are considered “Tier 2” words, because they occur across academic contexts (See Table 5).
Table 5: Tiers of Academic Vocabulary (Beck, McKeown, & Kucan, 2002)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tier III</td>
<td>Domain-Specific, technical words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Examples:</strong> atom, molecule, quarter note</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier II</td>
<td>General content words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples: cause, effect, endure, arrange, hilarious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tier I</td>
<td>Social vocabulary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Examples: table, come, happy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are several resources for finding words that would be considered in Tier 2. First, teachers should look within the standards being taught. Each standard describes a process that students are expected to perform. Standards of reading comprehension skills often include processes such as compare, contrast, define, synthesize, etc. All of these terms are Tier 2 academic vocabulary. Four “key uses” of language include the processes of discuss, argue, recount, and explain. ELs should be developing the language to do all of these skills, but they should also understand what these terms are asking them to do. Next, another source for academic vocabulary is in an Academic Word List (AWL). Researchers have created lists that include most frequently used academic vocabulary, most of which are considered “Tier 2” words. Various word lists from the Academic Corpus are available online, such as on the website for Victoria University of Wellington (n.d). Most frequent words in word families are grouped in sublists. Sublist 4 includes the word, “contrast,” one of the main reading skills taught in this sample lesson unit. Besides choosing Tier 2 words from a variety of sources, teachers should also teach vocabulary pertinent to the comprehension of key texts. Elementary classrooms often use a “mentor text” to model key teaching for an entire reading or writing unit. Teachers should prioritize teaching vocabulary necessary to understand this text, including any concepts that will provide necessary background knowledge for students. Figure 4 below shows an example of how one might support a key text about a fishing trip. In this example, students who have never experienced
fishing in a country where a motor boat and modern fishing pole are used will struggle to understand what it means to launch a boat, cast a line, or reel in a fish.

**Figure 4: Vocabulary Supporting a Key Text**

Besides prioritizing the explicit teaching of Tier 2 academic vocabulary, teachers should also teach concepts important to key texts used for instruction. In this way, teachers build vocabulary and background knowledge necessary to help their students overcome some of the obstacles to literacy. For a list of strategies for teaching vocabulary and oral language, see Appendix A and Appendix B.

**Addressing further challenges: Oral Language Development**

Oral language development can be a challenge for ELs, particularly if they feel self-conscious about how they sound in English. However, oral language development is also
important in building a good foundation for reading and writing (Roskos, Tabors, and Lenhart, 2009, cited in Zwiers and Crawford, 2011). Conversations also allow students to practice “reading strategies such as predicting, questioning, summarizing, clarifying, connecting, and interpreting (Ketch 2005, cited in Zwiers and Crawford, 2011). These strategies also boost student reading comprehension, as they require students to push themselves to understand the text thoroughly and to think critically about it. Oral language is also a good way for students to practice newly developed skills in phonological awareness in listening to the language of others and giving an oral response.

Not only is oral language development in English important for ELs, but it is also important to develop in their home language. Lems says, “children whose home language is not English will also benefit from developing strong oracy in their first language.” With strong oracy in their L1, students will “bring more vocabulary, background knowledge, listening skills, and self-confidence to the English-learning endeavor,” (Lems, 2010, p.57). English learners may have opportunities to develop oracy in their first language at home or with peers and teachers at school.

Teaching phonological awareness for literacy instruction must include supports not only for phonological awareness, but for the reading and writing content in which PA instruction is embedded. These supports should be a combination of sensory, graphic, and interactive supports appropriate to the language level of the ELs. Lessons should address major challenges for ELs, including strategic vocabulary instruction that will build background knowledge as necessary for specific texts, as well as opportunities to engage in academic discussions to enhance oral language.
Example Lesson Unit

Lesson Plan Rationale

Context of instruction. As the author of this paper, I presently teach students who are English language learners in third, fourth, and fifth grades at an elementary school in Northeastern Wisconsin. The community values education, and people have sacrificed to give towards projects such as remodeling the high school, building a new walking path, and building up the downtown business area. The public library, Boys and Girls Club, and other community organizations provide activities for our students year-round, and several local businesses provide their products or services for school fundraisers. At our building, parent participation increased last year though attendance at school assemblies, and representation at events such as the school choir concert, track and field day, and parent-teacher conferences. There is much pride in our community and support for the school district, yet there are also many challenges that the community, and our students, face.

This community is located between two other cities, so that they almost run together, yet it has a greater percentage of families of lower socioeconomic status than most of the schools in the surrounding districts. I do not mention poverty here to insinuate that students from families of lower socioeconomic status do not have great academic success or to lower expectations for the school because of our student population. I do so because educators need to know their students and the specific challenges that they face in order to best meet their academic needs. Data from the 2015-2016 school year, (Elementaryschools.org) shows that 66.7% of students from my school were eligible for free or reduced lunch assistance, a higher percentage than the state average of 42.8%. Recognizing students’ cultural identity is important also. Our school ethnicities from 2015-2016 included 67% white students. Of the 33% of students who were of
other ethnicities, 15% were Hispanic, the largest minority group. To support faculty and staff in working with our students, the district has offered professional development opportunities focused on working with students of poverty and students of various cultural backgrounds such as the Hispanic cultures. Almost all of the students in the building I work in are simultaneous bilinguals, meaning that they are learning English and their other language (Spanish, Hmong, or Japanese) simultaneously. In the past few years, students from Africa either of refugee status or those with limited formal education have started attending the district. However, most of the school’s population of ELs have had the opportunity to go to school since kindergarten, either in the United States or in another country.

**Evaluation of student needs: assessments and standards.** The school district’s policy is to score student writing with a language rubric at least twice per year. The district also uses an evaluation from our spelling curriculum to analyze the spelling needs of students. On this assessment and in student writing samples many ELs consistently struggle with spelling the short and long vowel patterns. Most students are also below benchmark in reading comprehension and in vocabulary knowledge according to data from the district’s reading assessment given three times each year.

Other considerations for determining student needs are the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA). This author will use ELA standards for third grade in the specific areas of *Language: Conventions of Standard English* and *Reading: Foundational Skills*. The “Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses Edition” (Key Uses), published by WIDA (2016), describes the language skills necessary for each language level and domain in order to perform the language functions: to discuss, argue, recall, and explain. Figure 5 includes only standards relevant to the lesson unit. The language standards and Key Uses, the grade-level content
standards, and the needs of the individual students, should all inform the teacher’s decision about which aspects of language to teach in small groups.
**Figure 5: Standards-Based Planning**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Learning Standards (CCSS, NGSS)</th>
<th>Language Standards (ELDS, Key Uses)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading</strong></td>
<td><strong>English Language Development Standards (ELDS)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3</td>
<td><strong>STANDARD 2</strong> Language of Language Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.</td>
<td><strong>STANDARD 4</strong> Language of Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.2</td>
<td><strong>Can Do Descriptors, Key Uses (2016) Edition Gr. 2-3</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea.</td>
<td><strong>LEVELS 2-3 READING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVELS 2-3 WRITING</strong></td>
<td>- Identifying elements of expository texts (e.g., graphs, captions) in illustrated texts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Comparing causes of different phenomena</td>
<td>- Locating details in content area texts or media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Stating ideas about content-related topics</td>
<td><strong>LEVELS 4-5 LISTENING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Communicating different content related ideas or opinions</td>
<td>- Identifying connectors in speech or text read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LEVELS 3-4 SPEAKING</strong></td>
<td>- Identifying content related ideas and details in oral discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describing consequences of behaviors or occurrences</td>
<td><strong>Science: Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Describing organizing categories for content-related information (e.g., fish/birds, forests/deserts)</td>
<td>NGSS 3-LS4-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construct an argument with evidence that in a particular habitat some organisms can survive well, some survive less well, and some cannot survive at all.</td>
<td><strong>LEVELS 3-4 SPEAKING</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Defend claims or opinions to content related topics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Evaluation of student needs: phonological awareness.** Classroom data from spelling assessments and student writing samples suggested that students are often spelling words with an “e” instead of an “i” in words that have the short “i” sound (/i/). Some of these students are bilingual, often speaking Spanish at home. All of these students pronounce these sounds accurately in English, with little to no accent when speaking. However, when sorting word cards during word work time, students are not always able to sort words based on short or long vowel sounds. Vowel sounds can be especially difficult for ELs or bilingual learners who know Spanish because several of the English vowel sounds (especially short vowel sounds) do not exist in the Spanish language sound system. To build upon what students are already able to do (orally use known words with short vowel sounds), consciously raising awareness of these short and long vowel sounds when listening to words, is one priority for these lessons.

Though students vary in their specific needs, this teacher decided to begin instruction in phonological awareness of short and long vowel sounds with the hope that students will transfer this knowledge into decoding and spelling words. Table 6 shows a sequence of steps for teaching blending and segmenting of words from “easiest to most difficult,” (Schuele & Dayton, 2000, Cited in Schuele & Boudreau, 2008, p.12). The lesson that follows adapts the idea to guide vowel instruction. Vowel sounds may be easier to hear if there are fewer challenges in hearing and pronouncing the consonant sounds of the word, especially certain continuants and blends. The example lesson plan uses the words in the table as examples for student instruction. Future instruction could be to segment and blend these same words as a way to review instruction in short vowel sounds and also to work on blending and segmenting.
**Table 6: Order of Instruction for Short and Long Vowels: From Easiest to Most Difficult.**  
(Adapted from Schuele & Dayton, 2000, cited in Schuele & Boudreau, 2008, p.12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sequence of Steps</th>
<th>Student Data⁷</th>
<th>Words for instruction: Short Vowels³</th>
<th>Words for instruction: Long Vowels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1.               | CV and VC words with continuants (e.g., no, us) | Correct Spellings: *if* | *see* *
|                  |               |                                     | *she* *
|                  |               |                                     | *lay* *
|                  |               |                                     | *they* *
|                  |               |                                     | *eat* |
| 2.               | CV and VC words with stops (e.g., two, up) | with- weth him- hem | *light* *
|                  |               |                                     | *late* *
|                  |               |                                     | *make* |
| 3.               | CVC words with continuants (e.g., moon, fish) | Correct Spellings: *shell* *fish* *live* *with* *live* *have* | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
| 4.               | CVC words with stops (and continuants) (e.g., cat, dish) | Correct Spellings: *dig* *pad* *back* *hatch* | *beach* *
|                  |               |                                     | *bite* |
| 5.               | CCVC words, begin with blends with dissimilar articulatory placement (e.g., small, flip) | *skin* *flip* *swim* *crab* | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
| 6.               | CVCC words, targeting nasal blends last (e.g., fast, jump) | think-thank | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
| 7.               | Words with continuants and stops in varying word shape | litter- letter | *
|                  |               |                                     | *
|                  |               |                                     | *

² Incorrect spellings note the correct word, followed by the incorrect student spelling. Correctly spelled words are designated as such.
³ Words with a “*” in either column signify that a form of the word appears in the text used for instruction.
Goals of the Lesson Unit

This sample lesson attempts to incorporate phonological awareness instruction into literacy lessons for third grade students who are EL and non-EL struggling in literacy. The lesson will also address the learning challenges presented earlier in this paper. The lessons will center on phonological awareness of certain long and short vowel sounds. Two non-fiction texts are used in an attempt to keep learning authentic and embedded in the context of a third-grade science unit on animal habitats and traits. The example unit is broken into five, twenty-minute sessions so that it could be delivered as a language intervention or as a strategy group. It can be delivered then, in a pull-out model, push-in, or co-teaching model, providing support for ELs either before or concurrent with their reading unit in the mainstream classroom.

The goals for the end of this short week of lessons are as follows:

a) Students will build academic vocabulary (*migrate*, *habitat*, *main ideas*, *compare* and *contrast*) in science and in language arts.

b) Students will build PA in the identification of short vowel sounds. Students will begin to write short vowel words with greater accuracy, particularly short “i,” and “e.”

c) Students will meet standard CCSS.ELA-Literacy. RI.3.9 by comparing and contrasting important points and key details in two texts about sea turtles. In doing so, they will build their academic language of making comparisons. In order to compare, they will need to use language such as “both,” “similar to,” “different from,” and compound language structures such as “Both _____, but _____.”

d) Students will meet language standards in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in order to accomplish comparing and contrasting key details. In speaking, they will describe organizational categories and defend their claims about the categories. In listening, they will identify content related ideas and details that their peers (and a video)
are communicating to them. In reading, students will identify elements of expository texts (e.g., graphs, captions) in illustrated texts in order to make comparisons. They will also locate details in content area texts at their reading level. In writing, students will compare the two different books, communicating content related ideas.

After this week of lessons, the unit could continue by connecting this unit with the science unit to address standard (3-LS4-3), that students “give evidence for the claim that some animals survive better than others in a certain habitat.” Students could give evidence from what they have learned about the habitat of sea turtles.
### Daily Lessons

#### Lesson 1: Building Background Knowledge and Vocabulary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th>Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles, by Ann Herriges; Sea Turtle Migration Video, concept web graphic organizer, sentence frames, sticky notes.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Content and Language Objectives | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a Grade 3 topic or subject area. **Key Uses, L3-4 Speaking**  
- Describe relationships between objects or uses for tools  
- Describe and organize categories for content-related information (e.g., fish/birds, forests/deserts)  
- Defend claims or opinions to content related topics  
**Key Uses, L4-5 Listening**  
- Identify content related ideas and details in oral discourse  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3 Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words. |
| Building Background & Vocabulary Knowledge (3 Minutes of Mini-Lesson) | **Sea Turtle Migration Video** (SEE Turtles.org, 2012). Show 3:00-3:46 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS0kXtmXuj8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZS0kXtmXuj8)  
Tip: Show videos without ads using a site like [https://safeshare.tv/](https://safeshare.tv/).  
(Play video at the end of the “Engage” section.) |
| Whole Group Mini-Lesson (10 Minutes) | Engage: Have you ever travelled a long distance or moved a long way away? Did you know that animals sometimes have to travel long distances, too? I wonder why they travel? Turn and talk with your partner.  
Prompt: Today we are going to begin a new non-fiction book unit about sea turtles. Watch this short video to see if you can find out how far this turtle, Adelita, migrated. Migrate means, “to move from one place to another” **(TPR: move hand from one place to another in an arch)** (Show p. 22 in Herriges).  
(Play the Sea Turtle Migration Video listed in the “Building background & Vocabulary Knowledge” section.)  
(Answer: Adelita the sea turtle traveled across the Pacific Ocean, 6,000 miles! It took her about a year.)  
Big Idea: Our new learning today is that good readers get ready to read nonfiction by thinking about what they already know about a topic. |
**Language Target:** Our language target today is that we will orally and in writing, describe sea turtles and ask questions about them, in partnerships, using a concept web and sentence frames.

**Study (Model): Concept Map**
First, you will each get a paper with the start of a concept map about sea turtles. Your job is to think about each subtopic (group). Then, jot what you know about sea turtles. If you know something that does not fit on the current web, you may add more subtopics or jot the fact in the space below. Finally, be ready to share out with our group. We will put our information together (synthesize). You can use these sentence frames to help you share out:

- I know that sea turtles __________________________
- I’d like to add that sea turtles also __________________
- I wonder why/how/when________________________

Note: This activity is also a pre-assessment, to see what concepts your students are already familiar with and what language they use to describe sea turtles.

**Differentiation:** Show certain pictures from the book or ask students to draw pictures, use first language, or label a printed picture.

| Oral Language Development and Guided Practice | Activate: |
| (5 Minutes) | Let’s come together as a group. We will share out what we know! (Role play with a student, using the following sentence frames.) I will start by saying a fact that I put on my concept map, “I know that sea turtles …live in the ocean.” Does anyone have information that connects with mine? Can you add on? “I’d like to add that…” |
| | What if we aren’t sure about our fact? We could say, “I think that…” instead of, “I know that…” |
| | As we read, let’s add interesting facts to our concept web. Think about the subtopic (category) where the fact fits the best. For example, it says here that sea turtles lay up to 120,000 eggs! Tell your partner next to you the name of the subtopic where this fact fits the best! |
| | This fact best fits with the subtopic of … because … |
| | I agree/ disagree because … |

| Lesson Closing | Let’s review what we learned today! When we start reading about a new non-fiction topic, we should get our minds ready to read. How did we do that today? |
| **Independent Practice – Begin reading** | (Listen to students read. Take observational notes about decoding, fluency, and comprehension. The teacher may keep reading with students after the lesson time has ended if this lesson is part of reading workshop time.) |
| **Language / Writing** | Embedded in the concept map activity. Students *described* categories (subtopics about sea turtles). They defended their reasoning about categorizing facts. |
| **Assessment of Target** | Use observational data about how students grouped information and the facts they add to the different categories. Also, notice student accuracy in the independent reading practice. |
### Lesson 2: Short Vowels Word Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th><em>Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles</em>, by Ann Herriges, one copy per student and teacher; Visual chart of types of text features to reference.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Content and Language Objectives | CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3  
Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3.D  
Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words  
**Key Uses: Reading**  
• Locating details in content area texts or media |
| PA/ Word Study Mini Lesson (10 Minutes) | **Engage:** Does someone have an interesting fact that would like to share from our book about sea turtles? (Let students share with the group briefly.) I learned that… I didn’t know that…  
**Word Study Target:** Our lesson today will be a word study. Good readers and writers pay attention to the sounds in words. Our goal today is to identify words with short “i,” and short “e” vowel sounds and to notice how our mouth changes when we make those two sounds.  
**Language Target:** I can describe how my mouth and my tongue moves when I say the short “i” and short “e” sounds. I can identify words with these two short vowel sounds, both orally and in writing.  
**Study (Model):**  
(Show students a visual like the one pictured below by Kim Fricke, a free resource on TeachersPayTeachers.com.)  
When we say different vowel sounds, our mouth moves to open wider and our tongue moves to the front of our mouth. Try saying these words with me and feel your mouth come open more with each word: *beat, bit, bait, bet, bat.*  
Listen to the word *bit.* The vowel sound in *bit* is /I/ (Make the short “i” sound. Point to the correct sound on the Vowel Ladder).  
Say the vowel sound in *bit* with me, /I/. (Make the short “i” sound. Point to the correct sound on the Vowel Ladder).  
What’s the vowel sound in *bit?* /I/ (Students say the short “i” sound).  
(Repeat the models with the word *bet* for the short “e” vowel sound. If time allows, continue with a couple more words from Level 1 and Level 2: *fish, live, with, live, dig.* Other words for short “e” not in the...*
Independent Practice Activities (5-7 Minutes)

Today when you are reading, notice the vowel sounds in words. Please make a list of words in your notebook or on a sticky note that include the short “i” or short “e” vowel sounds. (Model a sticky note with a T chart.)

How many words can you find? (Students read Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles. Students identify words with short vowel sounds. As students begin to read, listen to one or two students as time allows. Prompt students towards word solving strategies or ask them to identify short “i” and short “e” words.)

Oral Language Development and Guided Practice (3-5 Minutes)

**Activate:**
Compare and contrast your list of words with your partner’s list. Which words are the same? Which are different? If you disagree, please do so kindly, and explain why.

I agree! I have that word, too.
I disagree with the word, ___, because the vowel sounds like….
I disagree with the word, ___, because my mouth feels more/less open for the short vowel sound ___.

Closing (1 Minute)

**Closing:** Today we learned to describe how our mouth moves when we say the short “i” and short “e” sounds. Remember to think about vowel sounds to help you read and write!
**Language/Writing**

Students list main ideas that they see in the text. Share out these ideas orally at the end of the lesson.

**Assessment of Target**

Collect student notebooks at the end of the session as a formative assessment of identifying main ideas in a text and short vowel sounds in words.

---

**Lesson 3: Learning to Compare and Contrast Information in Two Texts**

**Materials**

*Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles*, (Herriges) and *Green Sea Turtle* (Jackson), each book one per student and teacher; whiteboards and markers, or notebooks and pencils; Comparison Planning Pages, one per student and teacher.

**Content and Language Objectives**

- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3**
  - Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3.D**
  - Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words
- **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.9**
  - Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.

**PA/Word Study Warm-up**

**Word Study Warm-up:** Our word study today is a quick warm up only. Yesterday we practiced identifying short /i/ and /e/ words. Can you sort these words into the correct categories? Please make a T-chart on your white boards or in your notebooks. Below the chart, leave a space for words that do not belong in either category. Some words have long vowel sounds.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>egg</th>
<th>with</th>
<th>shell</th>
<th>bite</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>dig</td>
<td>tiny</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>dig</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Whole Group Mini-Lesson**

**Engage:** Did you enjoy reading our first book, *Sea Turtles*? Did you find the answer to any of your questions? Today, we will start reading our second book, *Green Sea Turtles*.

**Big Idea:** Today I want to teach you that readers compare and contrast key details about the same subtopic that appears in different sources. That’s how readers research!

**Language Target:** I can orally list the steps to compare facts from two different sources about the same subtopic.

**Study (Model):** *First (TPR: First finger up)*, Find a subtopic that is included in both texts. I see that there is a section called “Laying
---

**Oral Language Development and Guided Practice (3 Minutes)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Activate:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>With your partner, continue by <strong>contrasting (TPR hand signal)</strong> these two sections about how sea turtles lay their eggs. Can you find some ways that they are different?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Both texts say that she lays her eggs on the beach, but only *Green Sea Turtle* includes the fact that the sea turtle lays her eggs at night. Maybe this is because *Green Sea Turtles* are different from other sea turtles in when they lay their eggs.

The text *Green Sea Turtles* is different from *Sea Turtles* because it says that the female lays her eggs every two or three years. *Sea Turtles* only says they migrate in spring and summer.

---

**Independent Practice Activities (5 Minutes)**

| **Ok, now continue to compare and contrast on your own. Choose one of the main ideas I have listed here. Follow the steps that we just did together. Jot down your notes on the planning page. You will have more time to work on your own tomorrow. You are not expected to finish reading the entire book. Just read the pages that relate to your main idea.** |

---

**Closing (1 Minute)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Today we learned that readers can compare and contrast the same subtopic that appears in different sources. List the steps with me.</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 1:</strong> Find the same subtopic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 2:</strong> Read both texts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Step 3:</strong> Compare and contrast!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language / Writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Target</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Lesson 4: Oral Performance Assessment: Comparing Key Details across Texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th><em>Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles</em>, (Herriges) and <em>Green Sea Turtle</em> (Jackson), each book one per student and teacher; Comparison Planning Pages, one per student and teacher</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Content and Language Objectives | **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3**
> Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3.D**
> Read grade-appropriate irregularly spelled words

**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.9**
> Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic. |
| PA/ Word Study Warm-up | Today, I want to check your progress on identifying the short vowel sounds that we have been working on. Please write these words in the correct category on the T chart: short “i,” short “e.” At the bottom, leave a space for words that do not fit into either category (words with long vowel sounds or short “a.”)

(Take notes on student progress. Give feedback and provide the Vowel Ladder visual. Students may begin working on their Comparison Planning Page if they finish early, leaving time for more individualized help today.) |
| Whole Group Mini-Lesson | **Engage:** You have been doing the work of a researcher as you dig into facts about sea turtles in different books, and how you are going to present your research findings. Are you ready for the challenge?

**Big Idea:** Today I want to teach you that readers can compare and contrast information about the same main idea that appears in different sources. Then, they share that information with others.

**Language Target:** I can orally compare and contrast key details from two books about the same main idea, using a class model and sentence frames.

Today, you will have a few minutes to finish your comparison notes from yesterday. Then, we will be sharing our learning with an activity called, **Line Up**. If you are finished with your notes, practice orally completing the sentence stems on your own or with someone else who is finished. You may also choose to make come comparisons of another main idea.) |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Independent Practice Activities (7 Minutes)</th>
<th>(Students work independently to finish taking notes on their Comparison Planning Page. The teacher should circulate and assist students as needed.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Oral Language Development and Guided Practice (5 Minutes) | **Study (Model):**  
(Model how to do the Line Up strategy or the differentiated sharing ideas. See a description in the list of strategies for teaching oral language for the Line Up strategy.)  
**Activate:** (Use the Line Up (Kagan, 1994) strategy for the performance assessment of the unit.)  
**Differentiation:** If your group size is under six students, the Line Up strategy may not work well. Instead, pair students up two different ways so that they can still practice the conversation twice. If this is not feasible, ask students to share with a partner for the first conversation and then have them share with the group the second time. |
| Closing (1 Minute) | Today we practiced orally comparing and contrasting information by sharing that information with others. You were able to teach others what you learned! |
| Language / Writing | Language functions: compare and contrast, describe, argue |
| Assessment of Target | (As the students are explaining their answers to their partner, the teacher listens in and assesses each student’s ability to compare and contrast the content information.) |
## Lesson 5: Written Assessment and Connection to Science

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials</th>
<th><em>Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles</em>, by Ann Herriges</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Content and Language Objectives | **CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.9**  
Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic.  
**CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RF.3.3**  
Know and apply grade-level phonics and word analysis skills in decoding words.  
**L.3.1.1** Produce simple, compound, and complex sentences.  
**L.3.2** Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.  
**3-LS4-3** Students give evidence for the claim that some animals survive better than others in a certain habitat |
| Whole Group Mini-Lesson (2 Minutes) | **Engage:** Today, we are at the end of our unit, but there is still more to learn! How can we take the information you have been gathering about sea turtles and think like scientists?  
**Big Idea:** Students will be able to show how much they have learned by taking an assessment. |
| Independent Practice Activities (10 Minutes) | Students will show what they have learned in a written assessment. They will communicate content related ideas in the form of identifying a main idea from the texts and explaining with key details. |
| Oral Language Development and Guided Practice (3 Minutes) | **Activate:**  
Share with your partner the answer to your “Connection to Science: Discussion Question.” Then, I will randomly choose someone to tell me their partner’s answer. (Sharing their partner’s response instead of their own often increases students’ attentiveness to their partner’s response.) |
<p>| PA/ Word Study (5 Minutes) | Students will take turns sorting words into vowel categories. Students could either cut and glue the words into the correct categories, or they could write the words on the correct side. If students were successful on Day 4, this task is not necessary. |
| Language Structures/ Writing | Describe, explain, justify. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Closing</th>
<th>(Give group feedback. Share any improvements the group has made.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assessment of Target</td>
<td>See Independent Practice and Vocabulary Knowledge sections. An informal assessment of listening skills is included in the Oral Language Development Section. Students must listen carefully so that they can repeat their partner’s answer later.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

Teaching English learners to read and write and think critically about a text is not easy. But it is a joy to see each small step of success, like when a shy new student’s face lights up as he stops at the picture of a parrot in his book and exclaims, “I have this in my house! In Africa!” and proceeds to tell the group about animals in Africa. Yes, ELs face many challenges, but they bring so much to the table. Literacy instruction is about them, the learners. What do they need in order to be successful in literacy?

ELs need books with familiar contexts, or they will need a teacher to provide background knowledge through pictures, videos, and demonstrations. The books chosen for the sample lessons were at the students’ instructional reading level. Both books were on the same animal, sea turtles, because background knowledge had already been built. The book *Green Sea Turtle* was more difficult. The order of instruction was carefully planned so that students would have the support of the vocabulary and context of the easier book first, *Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles*. The books also fit with the science curriculum so that students would have more exposure to the same vocabulary and language structures, namely the word “habitat,” and the sentence stems to help students justify their reasons with evidence. They would have more evidence about the habitat of a sea turtle than an animal that is unfamiliar to them altogether. Sea turtles are not very familiar to students in Wisconsin schools, so the topic also stretched all students in our group to learn some facts about a new animal. To help make content comprehensible, the teacher modeled her thinking for students and wrote clear objectives for both language and content. She used TPR to help build Tier 2 vocabulary of comparison language. Students also were required to think deeply to complete a concept map about sea turtles and then share their information with others. In these ways, the sample lesson plan shows strategic planning to help address the challenge ELs
face in having adequate background knowledge and vocabulary to accomplish the literacy objectives.

The example lesson plan also incorporated explicit teaching of short vowel sounds to increase phonological awareness. Instruction included noticing of particular vowel sounds and what their mouths needed to do when making those sounds. The PA exercises were planned for a small group of students. Though not all students were ELs, all struggled with identifying vowel sounds and choosing the correct short vowel sound when spelling. ELs may feel self-conscious about how they sound speaking English or be worried that they have the wrong answer. Care should be taken in conducting these PA exercises, especially at the higher grades. Separate small group or individualized instruction are often best. Always make the classroom a safe place to make mistakes. Build cultural knowledge and an appreciation for differences. The sample class this year participated in a schoolwide event that celebrated the cultures of the families of our school. Students were exposed to how different languages sound and learned why people sound different sometimes. These conversations are difficult to pack into a short, 5-week literacy lesson. Teachers should be responsive to classroom situations. Embrace cultural differences, yet also help students develop PA skills in order to increase literacy and to help them be more intelligible.

Oral language development and guided practice are built into every lesson. The sample lesson plan included partner work (an interactive scaffold), sentence frames (graphic scaffold), word banks (graphic scaffold), graphic organizers (graphic scaffold), and videos and pictures (visual supports) to support students in oral participation. Students participated in Line Up as a performance assessment opportunity. This way, they are practicing content and language multiple times. They are not limited by their ability to write a response, though there is also a
written piece of the assessment. In these ways, the sample lesson plan addressed the challenges that ELs face in developing PA skills for supporting literacy, as well as participating orally in classroom discussions about literacy.

The gap in literacy achievement between ELs and non-ELs may be great, but with awareness of student obstacles and a greater knowledge of strategies to meet these challenges, perhaps we can make a difference.
References


doi:10.1177/002246690003400204


Appendix A: Strategies for Building Vocabulary

Total physical response (TPR), (Asher, 1979). The purpose of TPR is “to increase comprehension of oral language input,” (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.43). The teacher gives a command and at the same time models the “appropriate kinesthetic response,” such as an action tied to a vocabulary word, or an action such as turning off the lights (p.43). Students should listen and respond to the command in the same way that the teacher modeled it. Eventually, students will not need the teacher to model the action. They should perform the action with the command only. TPR can be used to teach vocabulary words, connecting a specific action with a designated meaning so that the word is more memorable.

Open and closed sort tasks. The teacher chooses various categories of critical vocabulary words for a certain unit of instruction and either writes the words on word cards or posts them. Students are then placed in groups and asked to sort the vocabulary words into groups. Then, they choose the correct title for the group (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.48). An adaption to the closed sort tasks strategy, the open sort task allows students to find their own ways to sort the words and create a label for their categories accordingly (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.50).

Concept map. Concept maps, or webs, are a graphic support that can be given as a graphic organizer or created completely by students. In the example lesson plan, the teacher provides a central idea of “sea turtles” inside a bubble in the middle of the page. Then, lines connect the middle bubble to outer bubbles with subtopics, such as food or habitat (see Figure 6 below).
**Mix and match.** The teacher prepares matching cards, one with an academic vocabulary word and the other with the definition or a picture. Students are given one card from the stack. First, they must “walk around the room (Mix) reading and trading cards with other students,” (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.49. Then, the teacher announces that it is time to “match” their cards. Students should then find the person with the card that matches the one that they have so that the term and definition are together.
Appendix B: Strategies for Building Oral Language

Strategic partnerships. Zwiers and Crawford (2011 p.59) lists some features that help make classroom conversations effective. Some of those features include requiring both partners to talk, requiring critical and creative thinking, and taking advantage of controversies and conflict. Partners will disagree. One way to encourage all students to talk, including ELs, is to give them to make sure they have a stronger language partner (or a native speaker) who can model a higher level of English than their own. However, having too much of a gap between partnerships’ language or content abilities may cause frustration within the partnership or cause the advanced partner to do too much of the thinking work. Assigning partnerships and designating a certain label for each partner, such as “Partner A” and “Partner B” allows the teacher to modify the prompt for each partner, supporting the language learners and also holding them accountable in the conversation. Teachers can choose which partner goes first, whether or not there is a word bank (with or without visuals) and what type of language structures are necessary according to the prompts. The sample lesson plan includes differentiated sentence frames for each role of a partnership.

Sentence frames. Sentence frames are beginning parts of a sentence that are meant to help guide and support student responses. The sentence frames can be differentiated by language level by simplifying the structure of the frame and by adding a word bank with or without visuals. The frames provide a way for students to use academic vocabulary both orally and in writing (Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.49, 84). Attaching a visual and actions to sentence frames can be a very helpful and adaptable tool for classroom discussions. Teachers can create their own charts for the specific skill that they want to use in the classroom. They can create their own motions and visuals as well. Sentence frames for comparing and contrasting
could include the following: *(idea 1) and (idea 2) are similar because both______*. They are different because one _____, but the other ____.

**Word and/or picture sorts** (Wharton, M., 2018). In this activity, student partnerships are given slips of paper with one key term written on each paper. Teachers may decide to include a picture along with the word, or to use only pictures. Students must then work together to sort the words. They may be given headings for the categories, or they may be asked to create their own categories. Students give reasons for why they think a word belongs in a group. The other partner could choose to agree or disagree, and give a brief defense. Sample sentence frames could include the following:

Partner A: The word, _____. belongs with ____ because _____ and _____.

Partner B: I agree/disagree because ________

**Line up** (Kagan, 1994). In this activity, students stand facing each other in two parallel lines. The teacher provides a “recall or a thinking question,” and then gives time for each partner to share their answers. Then, when time is up, the teacher signals everyone in line #1 to move forward one place so that each person has a new partner. The first person in line #1 will have to move to the end of the line at each rotation. The teacher asks a question for each rotation (cited in Levine, Lukens, & Smallwood, 2013, p.34). This author has also seen this strategy used when the same question is repeated for a few rotations so that learners can improve their responses each time.
Appendix C: Lesson 2, Vowel Ladder

(Fricke, n.d.)
Appendix D: Lesson 3, Sort Task for Short Vowel Sounds

(Jackson, 2014; Herriges, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words with Short Vowel Sounds, Oceans Alive: <em>Sea Turtles</em></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>shell</td>
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<tr>
<td>with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>skin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crab</td>
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<tr>
<td>jelly</td>
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<tr>
<td>paddle</td>
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</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words with Long Vowel Sounds, Oceans Alive: <em>Sea Turtles</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>sea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they</td>
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<tr>
<td>late</td>
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Appendix E: Lesson 4 Performance Assessment

Name: _________________  Date: __________

**Directions:** Compare and contrast an important point (main idea) and key details from the texts, *Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles*, by Ann Herriges, and *Green Sea Turtles* by Tom Jackson.

**Important Point**

____________________________________

Both texts

• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________

Only *Sea Turtles*

• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________

Only *Green Sea Turtles*

• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________
• ____________________________________

**Sentence Frames:**

Both texts teach about the main idea ________________

The text *Green Sea Turtles* is similar to *Sea Turtles* because both ____

Both texts say that ______, but only Sea Turtles includes the fact that _____

The text *Green Sea Turtles* is different from *Sea Turtles* because it says____
Appendix F: Lesson 5 Written Assessment

Name: ______________ Date: __________

Directions: Circle an important point (main idea) from the box below. Then, write a short paragraph giving key details about that important point from the texts, *Oceans Alive: Sea Turtles*, by Ann Herriges, and *Green Sea Turtles*, by Tom Jackson. You may use your notes or the book.

Main Ideas:

| Sea turtles have unique bodies. | Sea turtles have a special life cycle. | Sea turtles need a certain habitat in order to survive. | Sea turtles have enemies. |

I know this because in the text, it says…

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Connection to Science: Discussion Question

In science class, we have been studying animal habitats. Can you show that sea turtles survive better than other animals in its habitat?

Some animals survive better than others in a certain habitat.

For example, the sea turtle survives best when

________________________________________________________________________

However, ________________ cannot survive well in this habitat because

________________________________________________________________________
Appendix G: Lessons 4 & 5 Written Assessment

**Directions:** Cut apart the words in the boxes below. Then, sort the words into the correct side of the chart below. Glue them in place. If you are not sure how to say a word, a teacher may read the word for you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words with Short “i”</th>
<th>Words with Short “e”</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Words without Short “i” or short “e”**  
(OTHER sounds)

<p>| | |</p>
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