Cultivating Bilingual Learners' Language Arts Knowledge: A Framework for Successful Teaching

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It is essential to support bilingual learners' language and academic development; however, teaching second language learners English has taken precedence over teaching content area knowledge and vocabulary, specifically for language arts. The focus has shifted from content area instruction to primarily second language instruction due to an increasingly diverse population and an increasing number of bilingual learners in formal school settings. This article introduces a framework for accomplishing both linguistic and content literacy simultaneously. The framework takes into account the four elements of the principles of learning, learner appropriate pedagogy, contextual interaction theory, student language (L1/L2) proficiency level, and a learner-centered environment that can lead to the successful achievement of content literacy for bilingual learners. The framework illustrates both the theory and practical applications that are needed for bilingual learners to achieve linguistic and cognitive success by attaining the language arts content literacy needed to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

Key Words*:* Bilingual Learners, Language Arts Literacy, Teaching Framework, Teaching Practices, Successful Teaching

INTRODUCTION

The concept of bilingualism is complex and multidimensional and being able to speak two languages has an array of implications. For instance, people may believe they are bilingual because they can hold a conversation in another language at home. Yet other people may consider themselves bilingual because they can read storybooks in a second language. Are these two people correct to think that they are *bilingual*? This would depend on how one defines being bilingual and what the expectations are of their level of bilingualism. Many people may be able to speak more than one language but may not be able to function academically in more than one language.

Currently, an estimated one in five children now live in homes in which a language other than English is spoken; impressing upon us the importance of meeting the needs of a more culturally and linguistically diverse school-age student population. As our society and nation become progressively more diverse, we must be prepared to meet

these challenges. Teachers have the task of both preparing bilingual students to meet not only the social demands placed on them of learning a second language; but, in addition, they must prepare them cognitively to meet the demands of content knowledge specifically in language arts. This is an inclusive and comprehensive approach and one that will prepare students to succeed not only in the realm of the classroom but also in the context of content knowledge.

In 1990, 1 in 20 public school students in K-12 was an English language learner. Future projections suggest that in 20 years, about 1 in 6 U.S. residents will be of Hispanic origin and by the middle of the century; this ratio will increase to about 1 in 4. The Latino population has grown dramatically in recent years, now comprising 12.5 % of the total U.S. population, with Mexican Americans making up 58% of all Latinos. Due to the extensive immigration from Mexico, 79 % of school-age children are native Spanish speakers (Garcia, 2002). By the year 2030, the U.S. Census Bureau projects that Latino students age 5-18 will number about 16 million which is approximately 25 % of the total school population.

Unfortunately, some second language learners are not succeeding in U.S. schools. The survey taken by the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition states that out of the 41 states that took part in the survey, 18.7% of English language learners scored above the state-established norm for reading comprehension (Kindler, 2002). This in turn has a rippling effect on the success of the Latino population. Whereas 10% of students who spoke English at home failed to complete high school, the percentage was three times high (31%) for language minority students who spoke English and five times as high (51%) for language minority students who spoke English with difficulty (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004).

The goal of our educational system is to develop bilingual learners who are developing full literacy skills in two languages, their native language and English. Jim Cummins argues that proficiency in language involves layers of skills and knowledge (2000). This distinguishes the difference between the socially demanding language, which involves everyday interactions, and the academic English needed for cognitively demanding language, which involves more complex structures used for content area instruction. The focus is on developing bilingual learners who can not only speak two languages but also perform tasks of academic rigor in both languages. The intent of this article is to gain a deeper understanding for how the bilingual learner develops knowledge, language, and language arts content literacy in the school environment, and to make a connection between the theory and its implications for practice.

Context - Framework for Developing Content Literacy for Bilingual Learners

In the framework described below, the learning principles, second language acquisition, and stages of language proficiency are used to frame the appropriate setting for the development of content literacy for bilingual learners. When teachers are in the pre-planning stage of a lesson or unit for bilingual learners, they must consider how students learn content and language, as well as, the stage of language development. This framework takes into account all these elements along with the importance of

using the appropriate pedagogy (methods used for teaching) and setting a learner-centered environment.

Learning across content areas, i.e., language arts requires students to attain and utilize reading and writing strategies to develop and gain knowledge. This process is referred to as *content literacy*. Constructing knowledge involves more than simply obtaining information; it entails a strong acquisition of content literacy (Alvermann & Phelps, 1998; Huang & Mullinix, 2002). The development and acquisition of content literacy is even more challenging for bilingual learners, regardless of the bilingual program they may participate in school. An effective approach to building strong content literacy skills is by actively involving students in their learning. Bilingual learners need to be exposed to the challenging content mainstream students (non-ELLs) are learning. Using this framework to structure instruction will assist teachers as they plan to effectively teach language arts content literacy to bilingual learners.
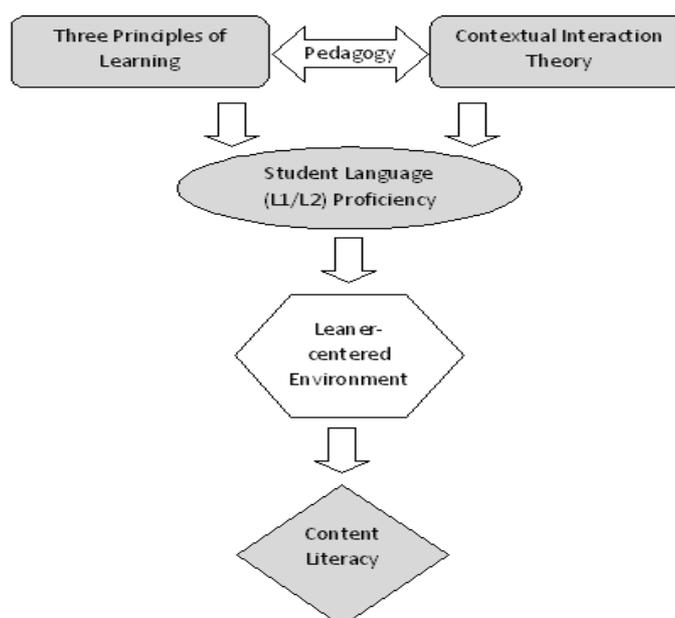

Figure 1: Framework for teaching bilingual learners new content literacy

The Framework for teaching bilingual learners new content literacy provides a visual of how the four elements of the principles of learning, appropriate pedagogy, Contextual Interaction Theory, student language (L1/L2) proficiency level, and a learner-centered environment can lead to the development of content literacy for a bilingual learner. Each of these five elements contributes to the evolution of language arts content literacy in a specific way; therefore, they do not work in isolation. In other words, a teacher

cannot only refer to the three principles of learning and expect bilingual learners to effectively develop content literacy.

Three Key Principles Of Learning

For the purpose of this article, we are going to focus on three major principles of learning presented by the National Research Council (2000) which are (1) Learning Principle #1: All students attend school with preconceived notions of how the world works; (2) Learning Principle #2: In order for students to develop the ability to make inquiries, they must have developed basic factual knowledge and the ability to manipulate that knowledge; and (3) Learning Principle #3: Students need to take a metacognitive approach to their learning so that they can become life-long learners.

Principle of Learning # 1- Engagement of Prior Knowledge and Understandings: The first principle is grounded on the idea that all students come to school with their own personal understanding of how the world functions, their *home knowledge*. Students bring experiences from home and their community that they will use to construct new knowledge in a more formal setting. Gonzalez, Moll, and Amanti (2005) refer to these home experiences as the *funds of knowledge*. The funds of knowledge are students' everyday life experiences such as interactions with family, community members, watching parents work, etc…that should be used as a stepping stone to school practices. This principle is founded on the idea that if the student's prior knowledge and understanding of the world is not stimulated, then new knowledge may not be truly learned but only memorized for short-term retrieval.

For example, think of situations when students are taught language arts vocabulary words by listing the words and having students find definitions using their textbook, dictionary, selected website, or other resource. The teacher may lead class discussions on these vocabulary words; however, since it is teacher-led, the students do not have a chance to make their own connections between their experiences and/or *home knowledge* and the new words. Therefore, in order to prepare for the vocabulary test, the students memorize the provided definitions of the vocabulary words and may perform well on the test. Yet, when students encounter the same words in different contexts or at a later time, they cannot recall the definitions. This occurs because students simply gained superficial knowledge of the words and did not make long-term connections between what they already understood of the concept to the new knowledge.

Principle of Learning #2- The Essential Roles of Foundational Factual Knowledge and Conceptual Frameworks in Learning for Understanding: The second learning principle explains how important it is for bilingual learners to have a strong grasp of foundational knowledge before they can begin to manipulate the information for higher order thinking and/or tasks. Higher order thinking skills require learners to think at higher levels of Blooms Taxonomy such as application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation levels. These higher levels of thinking skills foster and support creative and critical thinking. Bilingual learners need to acquire a strong knowledge base of the new concept and/or skills within the context of the knowledge, i.e. the writing process,

shared reading, literacy web mapping, etc…and properly store the new information in memory so that it can easily be recalled and used during a higher order thinking task and/or assignment. This higher order thinking task and/or assignment can be designed within the context of the new knowledge or out of context to add complexity to the task.

For example, when a second grade class of bilingual students is learning about parts of speech during the language arts block, all the basic knowledge and understanding associated with the parts of speech, i.e. nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, adverbs, etc… need to be strongly understood and developed, and properly stored in memory within the context of parts of speech. Once students have a firm foundational understanding in the concept of parts of speech, then the teacher can and should ask students to perform higher-order thinking tasks. For example, after students can demonstrate their basic knowledge of parts of speech by being able to successfully identify and explain each part of speech in a variety of sentences, i.e. students can diagram each part of speech and explain each; they are ready to perform higher order thinking tasks. An example of a higher order thinking task can include creating their own sentences using the correct parts of speech.

Principle of Learning #3- The Role of Understanding and Self-Monitoring of Thinking Processes: The third learning principle centers on the importance for students to take a metacognitive approach to their learning. As a result of developing metacognitive skills, students develop ownership over their learning. This ownership helps students become life-long, independent learners. Metacognition is, simply put, *thinking about your thinking*. Metacognition occurs when students take deliberate control over their learning, planning, and execution of learning through the use of learning strategies. Additionally, students examine the progress of their learning by looking for opportunities for improvement, and finally make any necessary adjustments to the learning strategies (Brown, Bransford, Ferrara, & Campione, 1983).

For example, one instructional strategy that initiates the metacognitive process and is widely used in today's classrooms is the K-W-L chart created by Ogle (1986). The K-W-L chart helps students make connections with their prior knowledge by first writing down all that they already KNOW about the new topic/content. Students then set goals to what they WANT to learn as they begin studying the new information. Finally, students reflect on what they LEARNED (one of the first stages of metacognition). Figure 2 is an example of how the K-W-L chart can be used when second grade bilingual students learn about the Solar System.

What I KNOW – K **-** *(completed before the lesson/unit)*
- there are planets
- the sun
- some planets have moons
- rockets go to space
- NASA sends people to space

What I WANT to know – W – (completed before the lesson/unit)

- Do plants live on the other planets?
- Can people live on the moon?
- Why does one planet have rings?
- How hot is the sun?

What I LEARNED - L – (*completed after the lesson/unit*)
- The Earth is the only planet with life.
- The sun's real color is white.
- The temperature of the sun is 5,778 Kelvin
- As of today, people can't live on the moon.

The K-W-L Chart

Although the K-W-L chart can be used to begin the metacognitive process, most teachers do not focus on that skill. The K-W-L chart has been used mainly to help students make connections to prior knowledge. However, the K-W-L chart is an effective start in helping students think about their learning and reflect on how their prior experiences and knowledge can construct new knowledge. It is a great challenge for most teachers to coach students in developing metacognitive skills because not all teachers use these skills themselves.

Although these three learning principles apply to all students it is especially important for teachers of bilingual learners to have a good grasp of them and apply them to planning and delivering instruction. Teachers need to recognize the alignment between these principles and language acquisition theories so that new knowledge can be more effectively developed and understood.

Effective Pedagogy Supportive Of Principles Of Learning

Teachers should be familiar with culturally relevant teaching. Culturally relevant teaching is a prevalent theme in the literature relevant to teaching bilingual learners. Ooka Pang (2001) describes this as "an approach to instruction that responds to the sociocultural context and seeks to integrate cultural content of the learner in shaping an effective learning environment" (p. 192). She contends that there is often a disconnect between the classroom experience and the learner's expectations of those contexts; therefore, she maintains that to be culturally responsive teachers must first make connections with the students and question how they perceive both the instruction and the classroom context. Additionally, the focus of instruction should move from rote memorization to an understanding and analysis of purpose and meaning (Moll, 1988). Thus, a hands-on approach is much more effective for bilingual learners.

As teachers are looking to maximize learning for culturally diverse students, they should teach in culturally responsive ways (Irvine & Armento, 2001). Teachers should align planning, instruction, monitoring of student progress, and grouping structures both reflective and characteristic of a culturally responsive curriculum and one in which students are able to see their culture in the context of the classroom.

Language Acquisition Theories

The Contextual Interaction Theory is based on five empirically grounded principles: linguistic threshold, dimensions of language proficiency, common underlying proficiency, second language acquisition, and student status (Cummins, 1996). These five principles illustrate how student input factors interact with language arts instruction. In addition, these principles of the Contextual Interaction Theory help explain how bilingual learners reach English language proficiency, academic achievement, and psychosocial adjustment (California State Department of Education, 1982).

The first principle in the contextual interaction theory is the linguistic threshold. Cummins' (1976) Threshold Theory explains that there is a particular threshold that determines if the level of proficiency in both languages will produce positive academic development and achievement. When one is a balanced bilingual, academically proficient in both languages, then there are positive academic and cognitive effects. For bilingual learners the degree to which proficiencies in both L1 and L2 are developed is positively associated with academic achievement (Collier & Thomas, 2004).

The second principle is the dimensions of language proficiency, which is the skill to effectively utilize language for both academic practices and basic communicative tasks. Cummins (1984) identifies two key dimensions of language proficiency: basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) acquired easily through daily living, and taking 2-3 years to develop and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) learned in an academic setting, i.e., skills learned in a classroom context developing within 5-7 years (Cummins, 1981).

The third principle Cummins (1981) constructed is the Common Underlying Proficiency (CUP) Model, which describes how children acquire competency in L1 and L2. It supports the idea that instruction in the L1 will assist and benefit the student in acquiring competency in the L2. Therefore, the Common Underlying Proficiency Theory implies that there is just one central location in the brain for processing language and supports the idea of transfer of knowledge and skills within languages, since all the information is stored in the same location of the brain.

The fourth principle is the understanding of L2 acquisition. Krashen (1982) developed a cognitivists/innatists theory for second language acquisition that consists of five hypotheses: Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, Natural Order Hypothesis, Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, Monitor Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis. These hypotheses are not presented in a particular sequence. Each can explain a different dimension of language development. However, together these five hypotheses explain how people progress through the multidimensional levels of second language acquisition. Krashen concludes that the key to second language acquisition is not the quantity of L2 exposure, but the quality of L2 instruction. That is, when a teacher is aware of the bilingual learner's second language development, the focus goes from a *more L2 coverage* approach to *more appropriate L2* experience. All in all,

acquisition of basic communicative competency in L2 is a result of comprehensible L2 input and an accommodating affective environment.

The last principle, student status, centers on the performance expectations people put on themselves and others and the results of these expectations. For example, when a teacher has low academic expectations of a student, then the student will more than likely perform to that expectation, and vice versa. When teachers treat students differently, due to race, ethnicity, language diversity, etc…the students' results will also vary. Even if the teacher delivers the same curriculum to a group of students, the results will be based on how the students are treated. Additionally, people's expectations of themselves and others are partly based on status characteristics such as age, language, achievement, race, and so on. This perceived status of students affects the interactions between school administrators, teachers, and students and among the students themselves. The different interactions and expectations can have an affect on educational outcomes as well. Therefore, it is critical for the school environment to be supportive and set high expectations for all students, especially the bilingual learners since their status can be much more complex involving differences such as culture, language, age, economic status, and ethnicity.

Effective Pedagogy Supportive Of Language Acquisition Theories

Inclusive pedagogy that supports the theoretical views of language acquisition is fundamental.   Accordingly, education needs to be meaningful and responsive to students' needs, as well as, linguistically and culturally appropriate (Tharp, 1997). Padrón and Waxman (1999) propose five effective instructional practices that support language acquisition, development, and knowledge. These research-based instructional practices are the following: (1) culturally responsive teaching; (2) cooperative learning; (3) instructional conversation; (4) cognitively guided instruction; and (5) technology-enriched instruction.

In acknowledging culturally responsive instruction, bilingual learners will benefit from a classroom environment where teachers have the goal of expanding learning through building on the languages and cultures that children bring with them (Barrera, Quiroa, & Valdivia, 2003; Slavin & Cheung, 2005). This is important in helping children feel successful. Allowing students ownership of the curriculum by integrating their experiences and prior knowledge specifically related to content areas such as language arts empowers them (Au, 1998). This will determine the way children will respond to new experiences, interpret events, and reality in the classroom. Additionally, River and Zehler (1991) emphasize that "culturally responsive instruction improves the acquisition and retention of new knowledge… improves self confidence and self-esteem and… increases the transfer of school-taught knowledge to real-life situations."

Cooperative learning benefits both the social language and academic content language for bilingual learners. Cooperative grouping provides opportunities for students to make connections with each other, thus lowering their affective filter and decreasing anxiety. This further develops proficiency in English by providing students with rich language experiences that integrate speaking, listening, reading, and writing.

Additionally, it develops social, academic, and communication skills and enhances self-confidence and self-esteem through both individual contributions and achievement of group goals. Cooperative learning promotes instructional conversation while improving individual and group relations by helping students learn to clarify, assist, and challenge each other's ideas. (Calderon, 1991; Christian, 1995; Rivera and Zehler, 1991).

Johnson and Johnson (1991, p.292) note that cooperative learning involves "the instructional use of small groups so that students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning." As such, when grouping, consider that providing explicit opportunities for peer interaction and engagement, as with the use of bilingual pairs. Students can be placed in bilingual pairs based on language and/or academic ability. Pairs can consist of native and non-native speakers or a more proficient speaker of the language with and a less proficient speaker of the language. There may also be a student who is more fluent in one language with a student who is more fluent in another language paired for specific instructional purposes such as reading aloud, choral reading or using the language experience approach for language arts. These pairs can be interchanged for various tasks at different times throughout the day. By placing students in bilingual pairs, we continue to maximize their learning. Faltis (1993) found that second language learners showed increased participation when they found themselves with other non-native speakers as opposed to being with native English speakers.

Instructional conversation is an extended discourse between the teacher and students. This strategy emphasizes instructional dialogue with teachers and classmates (Duran, Dugan, & Weffer, 1997). A major benefit of instructional conversation is the opportunity for extended discourse, an important principle of second language learning (Christian, 1995). For example, if students are engaged in a read aloud in language arts, "*Why mosquitos buzz in people's ears*," instructional conversations would involve students and teachers working together analyzing new vocabulary that is encountered in the story while teachers could pose questions that help students critically analyze the elements of the literature presented. These instructional conversations will benefit bilingual learners as they are reformulating previous concepts and attaching new vocabulary to them. Additionally, it will help the teacher who will have a clear indication of the level of social and academic second language development the student has acquired.

Cognitively guided instruction emphasizes the development of learning strategies and teaches techniques and approaches that foster students' metacognition and cognitive monitoring of their own learning. It is asserted that as students learn to effectively use these cognitive strategies, they will succeed. (Padrón & Knight, 1989; Waxman, Padrón & Knight, 1991). An example of cognitively guided instruction is reciprocal teaching during language arts, a procedure in which students are instructed in the following four comprehension-monitoring strategies (1) summarizing; (2) self-questioning; (3) clarifying; and (4) predicting throughout the lesson.

Technology-enriched instruction helps connect learning in the classroom to real-life situations, creating a meaningful context for teaching and learning (Means & Olsen, 1994). Examples include the use of web-based picture libraries, multimedia, digitized books, computer networks, and telecommunications. Through Internet and other technologies, students can assess information in their native language as well as in their second language.

These instructional approaches are based on the constructivist philosophy and a student-centered model of classroom instruction for language arts literacy. It is important to recognize that we are in a new era of education, which focuses on facilitating knowledge instead of delivering knowledge (Padrón & Waxman, 1999). Glickman (1998, p.52) describes this approach as "democratic pedagogy, which respects the students' own desire to know, to discuss, to problem solve, and to explore individually and with others, rather than learning that is dictated, determined, and answered by the teacher." In order to help children achieve academic language, pedagogy must be adjusted to provide instruction in which oral language development, literacy development and content learning simultaneously support one another. By providing opportunities for actual conceptual learning along with supportive instruction, students add to their existing schema.

Application of the Framework to an Elementary School Language Arts Lesson

The following is an example of a first grade language arts lesson for bilingual learners following the framework described in this article.

Language arts lesson in L2 conducting a read aloud

As part of the preplanning stage the teacher must be aware of the level of L2 language proficiency of the bilingual learners. This will impact the engagement in the lesson and mastery of the lesson objective.

Student learning objective: The bilingual learner will explain the sequence of the story using the read aloud, *The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything* written by Linda Williams. Key Vocabulary Words: sequence, afraid, order, next

Focus of lesson: The teacher will review the concept of sequencing by showing students a flashlight. She will show students that the battery must go into the flashlight case before the flashlight can function. Then, the components of the flashlight will be screwed together and tightened in order for the flashlight to function. The teacher will review what she did first, second, third and so forth. The teacher will then draw on prior experiences from their lives. She will discuss the sequential order of the students' morning routines and then relate this to her previous example of the sequential order needed for the flashlight to work. She will then explain to students that they will be exploring the sequence of events using a read aloud, *The Little Old Lady Who Was Not Afraid of Anything.*

Before the teacher reads the book, she will show the book cover and ask prediction questions such as "What do you think this story is about?" Then she will preview the

book with the students by doing a 'picture walk,' asking students what they see in the pictures for an opportunity to familiarize students with the book. The teacher will ask the students to identify and label each article of clothing that will appear in the story by showing the actual garment and allowing the students to touch each of them. This will facilitate vocabulary development in the lesson. The teacher will show the front cover of the book to the students. She will read the title and have student turn to their partner and discuss the title asking them if they know what the word "afraid" means and ask the students to share with each other an experience of when they were afraid. Thereafter, she will read the book and display the articles of clothing in the order in which they appear in the story.

Activity #1: In partners, the students will discuss the sequence of the story noting what happened first, second, third and so forth in the story. Students will sequence the elements of the story on a flannel board using felt pieces. In bilingual pairs, students will process the story elements and negotiate with each other while putting the story in sequential order.

Activity #2: Students will be given a sheet of paper and they will draw the events of the story in sequential order. They will agree on a sentence to write for each of the events of the story. They will re-enact the story following the sequence of events of the story in pairs.

Activity #3: After much collaboration, negotiation, and discussion have taken place between the pairs, they will then compare their sequence of events to that of another bilingual pairs' sequence of events to confirm the correct sequence of the story as well as mastery of the objective. Thereafter, students will record their concluding sequence of events in their journal.

Connection between Language Arts Lesson and Framework

The following section helps solve the jigsaw and get the whole picture of what occurs by connecting the framework to the language arts lesson described above on sequencing.

Three principles of learning: The teacher conducting the language arts lesson asks students to draw on prior experiences from their lives. She discusses the sequential order of the students' morning routines and then helps students relate this to the teacher's visual example of the sequential order needed for the flashlight to work. Students are using the second principle of learning by activating their prior knowledge of the sequence of events that take place in their morning routine and applying this to the new context.

Pedagogy: Throughout the lesson, students are working cooperatively, namely in bilingual pairs and thus have various opportunities to interact with one another, negotiate meaning, and use the academic vocabulary needed for sequencing elements of the read aloud. Students participated in instructional conversations throughout their partner work in the various activities. These are effective research-sound pedagogical strategies that promote both linguistic and academic language arts vocabulary for

students. As students compare their sequence to another pairs sequence they are tapping into their metacognitive skills and analyzing their understanding of the sequence as compared to another pairs understanding. The teacher is displaying culturally responsive teaching by having students discuss their morning routines with each other.

Contextual interaction theory: In the preplanning stage of the lesson, the teacher took into account the level of language proficiency in order to effectively teach language arts content vocabulary. The fourth principle of contextual interaction theory – the comprehensible input and affective filter theory resonant throughout the lesson as the students are acquiring L2 via the discussion about the read aloud, their understanding of the word 'afraid,' and the sequence of events in the story. The comprehensible input provided by the discussion of their prior experiences in their morning routines and the visual of the flashlight provide a vehicle for their L2 skills as they are engaged in the lesson. The affective filter is lowered as the students engage cooperatively with each other in content vocabulary. Consequently, they inherently develop L2 through the comprehensible input provided and the affirming affective environment in which it is taking place.

Student language -L1/L2- proficiency: The students' language proficiency was taken into account as the teacher planned the lesson. This consideration determined the types and levels of student activities conducted throughout the lesson in order to provide opportunities for students to take risks and successfully achieve language arts content literacy.

Learner-centered environments: The classroom environment provided risk-free opportunities for students to engage in hands-on, collaborative activities from which they further developed their language arts content knowledge.

DISCUSSION

The language arts lesson described above provides an illustration of both the theoretical framework and its practical application to language arts content learning. This will assist bilingual learners to successfully achieve language arts content literacy while engaging in higher order thinking skills. The framework for teaching bilingual learners new content literacy supports both L1/L2 proficiency and language arts content knowledge. Each of the elements contributes to the development of language arts literacy; thus, they do not work independent of one another.

Teachers typically learn about the components of the framework in isolation and many times they are not provided with the appropriate contextual support needed to connect these theories and approaches to promote and enrich bilingual learners' language arts content knowledge. Bilingual learners have varying degrees of language proficiency and teachers must be aware of their developmental stages in order to plan appropriate activities (Allison & Rehm, 2011). However, teachers cannot only take into account appropriate pedagogy and expect to support bilingual learners' language arts literacy without tapping into the three principles of learning, contextual interaction theory or learner-centered environment. The elements in the framework work collaboratively and

provide support for one another so they must all be recognized in order to support bilingual learners' language arts content knowledge.

CONCLUSION

By engaging bilingual learners in higher order thinking activities, they expand their understanding of the language, their content literacy, and are able to transfer knowledge from one language to another. Helping bilingual learners become life-long learners involves developing their higher order thinking skills and metacognitive abilities. Thus, the principles of learning are tapped into throughout the learning. Additionally, through effective, strategic and comprehensive pedagogy bilingual learners will be successful in both the language skills and cognitive skills needed for language arts content comprehension.

Culturally relevant instruction and hands-on, risk-free classroom environments in which bilingual learners are free to actively engage with each other and that reflect bilingual learners' culture are essential as well. This will lead to active learning of content and meaningful peer interactions. Consequently, using the four elements of the principles of learning, appropriate pedagogy, contextual interaction theory, student language (L1/L2) proficiency level, and a learner-centered environment simultaneously will lead to the successful achievement of language arts content literacy for bilingual learners.

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