CHAPTER 7

Meeting the Demands of the ELA Common Core for English Language Learners: Developing Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension Skills in a Language-Rich Classroom Environment

Megan Madigan Peercy, University of Maryland

Lauren T. Artzi, University of Maryland

Rebecca D. Silverman, University of Maryland

Melinda Martin-Beltrán, University of Maryland

The Common Core State Standards and Specific Demands for ELLs

The reading, vocabulary, and peer learning strategies reported in this chapter were developed as part of Reading Buddies (RB), a cross-age peer learning program between children in upper and lower elementary school (Silverman, Martin-Beltrán, & Peercy, 2011)[1]. RB utilized a combination of texts, multimedia, and peer interaction to promote a language-rich environment for both ELLs and non-ELLs. Although RB was field-tested with elementary-aged students, the pedagogical strategies we elaborate upon have been shown to have positive impact on ELLs across a variety of grade levels (e.g., Gersten et al., 2007).

In this chapter, we describe strategies we designed to support ELLs in reading comprehension and in using academic vocabulary to discuss content from the text. The instruction described here integrates vocabulary support with reading strategy instruction, and utilizes multimedia as well as peer-to-peer interaction. With each pedagogical practice, we describe how language demands

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were scaffolded to help ELLs read and talk about texts. We also illustrate interactions between ELL participants in the RB program to show how students worked together.

Rationale

According to the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO; 2010b), schools have gradually lowered standards for grade-level text complexity over the last half-century. To reverse this trend, the NGA and the CCSSO set increased standards for grade-level texts so that students are better prepared to read in postsecondary and professional settings by the end of 12th grade. Similarly, the NGA and the CCSSO increased the difficulty of what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade level in order to prepare students to be college and career ready (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a). These standards, the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), are meant to serve as the target for student performance skills at each grade level, but states, districts, schools, and teachers are left to determine how to support their students in achieving the standards (Silverman & Doyle, 2013). Furthermore, these stakeholders are responsible for determining how to best meet the needs of ELLs who may need additional instructional support to access grade-level content, which should include instruction to promote oral language proficiency, vocabulary acquisition, and reading comprehension skills.

In the sections below, we provide the research-based rationale that undergirds the strategies developed in the RB program to support ELLs' literacy growth: vocabulary instruction integrated with reading comprehension instruction, and ways to promote a language-rich environment.

Research Foundation

Reading Comprehension Instruction

Explicit instruction of comprehension strategies helps students attend to essential components of a text and monitor their learning (Pressley, 2002). The CCSS assert that it is best if authentic classroom activities contextualize reading strategy instruction:

> Students need to build an infrastructure of skills, habits, knowledge, dispositions, and experience that enables them to approach new challenging texts with confidence and stamina. As much as possible, this training should be embedded in the activity of reading the text, rather than being taught as a separate body of material. (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 9)

Additionally, research indicates that instruction is most effective if strategies are explained, modeled, and gradually released until students can perform the task at an independent level (e.g., I do, we do, you do; Duffy, 2002). Practices shown to be effective for all students include

- promoting student self-questioning, predicting, and summarizing;
- clarifying key vocabulary and concepts;
- promoting student use of text features;

- fostering background knowledge; and
- helping students visualize graphic representations of the text (Armbruster & Osborn, 2001).

While these practices are also effective for ELLs, research indicates that additional instructional support helps address ELLs' learning needs (August & Shanahan, 2006). Instructional techniques shown to be effective for ELLs include

- defining learning and language objectives,
- providing opportunities for practice and peer interaction,
- providing sustained assessment that informs reading instruction, and
- integrating vocabulary instruction into reading instruction (Calderón, Slavin, & Sánchez, 2011).

Vocabulary Instruction

Word knowledge is a vital component of reading comprehension and is especially critical for ELLs, because strong vocabulary skills are associated with increased reading comprehension skills (Proctor, Carlo, August, & Snow, 2005). Providing a language-rich environment that fosters awareness in words and word learning strategy instruction can also help students become better self-directed word learners (Graves, August, Mancilla-Martinez, 2013). Increased vocabulary knowledge is an important facet of the CCSS. As the CCSS website explains, "the standards expect that students will grow their vocabularies through a mix of conversations, direct instruction, and reading. They ask students to determine word meanings, appreciate the nuances of words, and steadily expand their repertoire of words and phrases" (Common Core State Standards Initiative [CCSSI], 2010b).

To maximize vocabulary learning, teachers can judiciously choose words for explicit, multifaceted instruction. The CCSS emphasize not only domain-specific words found mostly in one subject area (e.g., *photosynthesis*, *mitosis*), but also general academic words that cut across academic subjects (e.g., *confidence* and *identify*). For instance, the CCSS College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards state that students will "acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases . . . [and] demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression" (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a, p. 25).

Practices in vocabulary instruction that are effective for non-ELLs are also likely to be effective for ELLs (August & Shanahan, 2006). These practices include

- exposing children to words through authentic contexts;
- providing definitions in student-friendly language;
- providing opportunities to interact with words in a variety of contexts;
- supporting children in activating prior knowledge and comparing and contrasting word meanings;

- fostering students' awareness of words in their environment; and
- promoting word learning strategies to include analysis of word parts, use of dictionary and reference tools, and utilization of context clues.

Research also indicates that additional instructional support is needed to support ELLs' specific learning needs. These supports include

- utilizing students' knowledge of their first language and cueing students' awareness of cognates, or the words that look and sound similar across two languages;
- supporting the foundation of ELLs' vocabulary through instruction of everyday words, sometimes referred to as Tier I words;
- using nonlinguistic support such as acting out words, showing pictures of words, using multimedia, and visualizing; and
- differentiating instruction based on the language needs of students (e.g., Carlo et al., 2004; Silverman, 2007).

Fostering a Language-Rich Environment

Extensive reading, listening, speaking, and writing activities help to bring about the kind of language-rich environment that ELLs need to develop vocabulary necessary to engage with the more complex texts required by the CCSS. While the CCSS place more emphasis on the use of informational text than previously, both literature and informational text play an important role in the standards; there are CCSS strands devoted to both genres. Text-sets that consist of an array of text types can help expose ELLs to varied forms of written language use and a broader array of vocabulary.

The CCSS call for multimedia to extend students' reading experiences, requiring students to "compare the knowledge they gain from reading texts to the knowledge they gain from other multimedia sources, such as video" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 13); multimedia can be used in a complementary fashion with text sets. Carefully selected, scaffolded, and captioned multimedia is well-suited to support ELLs in language-rich instruction because it integrates oral language input with visual support, as well as reinforcement with connected-text (Silverman & Hines, 2009). Multimedia is not only supported in the CCSS, but the Standards call for students to critically evaluate media.

Peer interaction is another critical component of a language-rich environment that is highlighted in the CCSS. An important focus of the Speaking and Listening Standards is academic discussion in one-on-one, small group, and whole class settings. Formal presentations are one important way that such talk occurs, as is informal discussion (CCSSI, 2010a, p. 2). It is essential for ELLs to have opportunities to practice using English in meaningful contexts to develop their English proficiency (August & Shanahan, 2006). Graves, August, and Mancilla-Martinez (2013) assert that ELLs need to "hear the spoken language in a wide variety of situations and engage in frequent discussion in which they interact with other students, with teachers, and with mature and more proficient language users in real communicative situations" (p. 36). Thus, guided pair and small group work,

including cross-age peer learning, provide authentic opportunities for fostering interaction. When reading instruction is embedded in peer learning, students work together to practice their use of self-regulating reading techniques, and those metacognitive reading skills are integral for comprehending difficult texts independently (Van Keer & Verhaege, 2005).

Pedagogical Practice: Reading Buddies

The development of the RB program was informed by research-based pedagogical practices related to reading comprehension, vocabulary acquisition, and peer learning, as well as the demands of the CCSS. To help focus student attention on the language and content needs of each lesson, content and language objectives were shared with students via PowerPoint at the start of each lesson. At the end of the lesson, objectives were revisited and students used active response to indicate whether they felt the objectives were met.

Lessons (see Table 1) were designed to be implemented in 45 minutes, with each weekly lesson set consisting of one grade-level preparation lesson and one cross-age peer tutoring (CAPT) session in which older students (Big Buddies) and younger students (Little Buddies) were paired to interact with texts through discussion using the focal vocabulary words and the vocabulary and reading comprehension strategies. Big Buddies prepared for the CAPT session through a preparation lesson consisting of reciprocal practice engaging with the text in same-aged pairs, where the buddy roles were rotated throughout the lesson (see Van Keer & Verhaege, 2005, for a discussion related to reciprocal tutoring with same-aged students). The preparation lessons began with vocabulary support, followed by same-aged pair work with the text or video, followed by reinforcement activities

Table 1. Outline of Reading Buddies Lessons

Preparation Lesson for Big Buddies	Cross-Age Peer Learning Buddy Session
Preview vocabulary and practice the word learning strategy. Teacher models use of the vocabulary strategy and students practice in partners with a few of the target words.	Talk about the words each partner chose for his or her nametag and preview the vocabulary in the text.
Read the text with the reading comprehension strategy. Teacher models the use of the reading comprehension strategy with a small portion of text. Students then read in pairs using the reading comprehension strategy. Students work together to summarize the text at the end.	Read the text together using the reading comprehension strategy. Students work together to summarize the text at the end of reading.
Engage with application activities that integrate writing and speaking prompts and reinforce the content of the text with the embedded targeted vocabulary. Students then work with a partner to discuss how they can help their Little Buddy understand the application activity.	Complete application activities that integrate writing and speaking prompts and reinforce the content of the text with the embedded targeted vocabulary.
Make a word nametag of the most important focal word to be worn to the Buddy Session.	Play games to reinforce the content of the text as well as the targeted vocabulary. Games include previous units' words. They consisted of matching activities, board games, dramatizations, and Bingo.

utilizing the focal vocabulary. On a separate day, the Big Buddies met with Little Buddies and coached the Little Buddy through the CAPT session, which followed a similar format.

While it may not be feasible to implement an actual CAPT program in all instructional contexts, elements can be utilized with same-aged students to help foster peer interaction around classroom-based reading activities. We found that pedagogical practices that supported ELLs included scaffolded materials with nonlinguistic support, integrated vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction using multimedia, and peer supports such as utilization of the first language.

Material Supports

PowerPoint presentations and activity pages accompanied each lesson and consisted of photos illustrating the focal words, pictures from the text, and graphic organizers to support student use of the vocabulary and reading strategy. Teachers also provided students with a lesson checklist that organized the lesson components into before, during, and after reading activities. When introducing focal vocabulary, teachers used voiceovers in Spanish, the first language of many of the students in the RB program. Teachers also provided visual word wall cards consisting of a photo, the target word in Spanish and English, and a caption for the photo with the focal word for display in the classroom.

Teachers can incorporate many of these elements into their instruction.[2] For example, voiceovers of translations of focal vocabulary may assist teachers who do not speak the students' first language. These can be recorded directly into PowerPoint presentations from most online bilingual dictionaries. Furthermore, word walls with pictures tend to benefit students because pictures reinforce visual representations of words. Checklists may also help focus student attention on the sequence of important elements in the lesson during peer learning activities.

Students also received a supplemental picture glossary of the focal words in each text (see Figure 1 for an example) composed of a photo depicting the target word, a caption connecting the photo and the word, and the Spanish translation for the word. Should teachers want to develop their own supplemental glossary, many of the features for creating a glossary can be found at Wordsmyth Lexipedia's glossary maker (www.wordsmyth.net; Parks, Ray, & Bland, 1998).

Selection of Texts

Following CCSS specifications regarding the need to select texts that build the "knowledge base" of students around a certain topic and draw on multimedia to add to the students' reading experience—"engag[ing] students in absorbing or expressing details of the text rather than becoming a distraction or replacement for engaging with the text" (Coleman & Pimentel, 2012, p. 13)—the English language arts (ELA) units we designed centered on themes inspired by the grade-level state content standards in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM). Each STEM-inspired unit was 3–4 weeks long and combined an animated captioned video with text sets consisting of a mix of short narrative and informational texts. In later units, we included digital informational texts delivered via electronic tablet.

[2] RB learning materials developed by the authors are available on the PBS Learning Media website at http://www.pbslearningmedia.org/collection/msts/.

depend

When you **depend** on something, you need help from it.

Español: depender

☐ Pronounce
☐ Explore
☐ Try it out

Baby chicks **depend** on their mother bird for food.

Figure 1. Supplemental Picture Glossary Entry

We suggest developing ELA literacy units around themes inspired by topics evident in grade-level standards of other content areas and then matching videos and different text types, including digital texts, to extend the topics. Streaming programs such as *United Streaming* (Discovery Education, 2013) frequently offer a wide selection of media types; often, the videos are chunked into segments and captioned, which tends to aid comprehension. Digital texts are often available on streaming sites as well. While some sites require a subscription, many open access videos and digital texts can also be found at sites like the Public Broadcasting Network's Learning Media page (2013).

Explicit Vocabulary Instruction

In RB lessons, teachers drew students' attention to four focal vocabulary words in each lesson before and after students engaged in pairs with the text, which also contained the focal words. As specified in the CCSS, focal words were purposefully selected to contain a mix of general academic (e.g., *depend, consequence, determine, confirm*) and domain-specific (e.g., *litter, pollution, volume, perimeter*) vocabulary important to understanding key concepts within the STEM unit themes. The focal words selected were important for accessing grade-level school-based texts, as determined by vocabulary lists such as *The First 4,000 Words* (Sales & Graves, 2009), *Wordzones for 4,000 Simple Word Families* (Hiebert, 2012), the *Educator's Word Frequency Guide* (Zeno, Ivens, Millard, & Duvvuri, 1995), and *Words Worth Teaching* (Biemiller, 2008), and were important in understanding key content concepts connected to the texts and unit topics.

Many of these resources are open access on the Internet or available for a moderate fee through a publisher. An additional open-access site that may be useful for referencing information about a word's utility is *WordSift* (www.wordsift.com; Roman, Wientjes, Thompson, & Hakuta, 2009). For the secondary level, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (Davies, 2012) contains a list of words that are frequently found in postsecondary texts called the Academic Vocabulary List. Both *WordSift* and the Academic Vocabulary List text analyzers allow teachers to input their own text directly into a window and receive an immediate output of the words with associated frequency data. In order to determine the utility of words, curricular materials can be used as a starting point

and cross-referenced with some of the lists cited above. Teachers might also choose focal words for a lesson based upon the word's importance to understanding the content and unit topic.

Teachers used PowerPoint presentations to show photos that illustrated the lesson's focal words, and then students engaged with each focal word through conversation prompts and active response techniques. For example, the teacher first showed a PowerPoint slide with the glossary entry (see Figure 1). Another PowerPoint slide consisted of different pictures and numbers under each picture; students were prompted to indicate with fingers the picture that best represented the word and then justify their response to a partner sitting next to them. Prompts engaged partners in conversation with the word (e.g., "Describe a **habitat** you would like to visit").

Through our field testing, we found that peer conversation utilizing the words was best fostered when the prompts were more open ended, higher order, or descriptive, as opposed to closed-ended questions (Martin-Beltrán, Peercy, Silverman, & Daniel, 2013). To help scaffold the language demands of these prompts, sentence frames were provided on the PowerPoint slide when needed (e.g., "When I see litter, I feel . . . because . . ."). Inserting connective words (e.g., *because, therefore*, etc.) and modeling extended answers fostered pair conversation better than simply asking "why?" after a question. We suggest providing open-ended prompts with the focal words for student pairs to engage with and using sentence frames if monitoring demonstrates that students need the additional support. While students engage in conversation, teachers may need to prompt expressive use of the focal word or recast answers with the target word.

To facilitate word awareness, students wrote their favorite focal word on a nametag (see Figure 2) and justified their choice in discussion with a partner. Students then wore the nametags to the RB session to share with the Little Buddy (Little Buddies drew their favorite word on the nametag; a similar technique could be used by ELLs with lower levels of English proficiency, or students could both draw and write the word to reinforce their understanding of the word meaning). Buddy pairs discussed their favorite words at the start of the RB session. To link word awareness and kinesthetic learning styles, teachers prompted students to indicate, by snapping fingers, when they heard one of the focal words in another part of the school day.

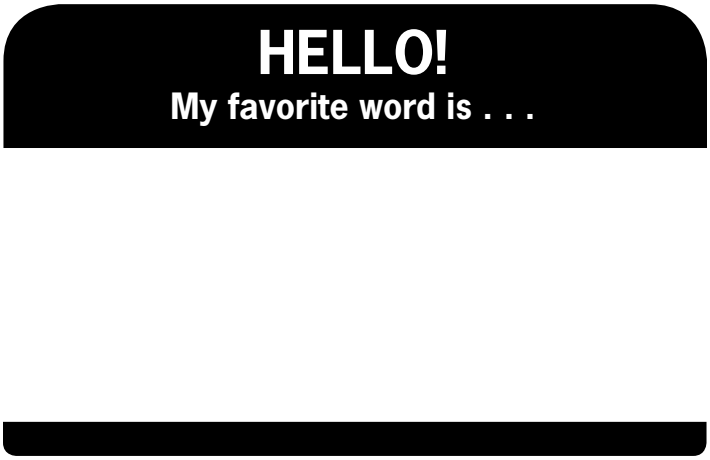

Figure 2. Favorite Word Nametag

Students often drew on the word knowledge gained in the preparation lesson to explain words to each other, using pertinent examples that were well understood. Below, we share a few examples from buddy interactions, in which three different Big Buddies explained the meaning of words to their Little Buddy partners. We present short excerpts of a few exchanges between Big Buddies and Little Buddies that included the focal words.

Excerpt 1

Big Buddy to Little Buddy in a session on environmental awareness [*destroy* is focal word]: "When you destroy something, you ruined it, harmed it."

Excerpt 2

Big Buddy to Little Buddy [*destroy* is focal word]: "Say, I destroyed this pencil. I break it, so I hit it and then I break it. Then it's broken, and I destroyed the pencil."

Excerpt 3

Big Buddy to Little Buddy [*complex* is focal word]: "Complex means something is hard and difficult. Say like I'm playing a game and it's really hard and I can't win it. It's like that. You're doing a math problem, say you're doing 100 times 100, and I don't know it. I think it's hard. That's what it is. Can you tell me what complex is?"

Students also incorporated words from previous units into their whole-class conversations, as demonstrated in an example from a teacher-led lesson.

Excerpt 4

Teacher [when reading RB story aloud to students]: "Why don't you think they were invited?"

Student: "He's mean and thoughtless." [*Thoughtless* was a focal word from a previous unit.]

Because only four words could realistically be targeted for explicit instruction in each lesson, eight additional semantically linked words were embedded within the text to maximize exposure to high-utility vocabulary. The embedded words received the text supports (e.g., they were bolded with a footnoted meaning and a bilingual picture glossary entry) but were not explicitly taught. Students knew to utilize the vocabulary text supports when needed. During one preparation lesson for the Big Buddies, a student explained, "there's this key at the bottom of the page that shows you" (referring to the footnoted explanation for a bolded word).

The videos contained embedded oral explanations of focal words, and the words also appeared in the caption at the bottom of the screen. Teachers also provided students with the supplemental picture glossary for the focal words in the video.

Because only a limited number of words can be targeted for explicit instruction, using diverse text types and including multimedia can help expose students to more words. Additionally, teachers can embed additional words in conversation prompts about the texts or videos. Because teachers are generally unable to explicitly teach all difficult words in text or via multimedia, they can clarify word meanings through parenthetical explanations, often referred to as embedded vocabulary instruction (Coyne, McCoach, Loftus, Zipoli, & Knapp, 2009).

To reinforce focal vocabulary words after the reading, the program utilized application activities that integrated content information with the focal words. For example, after reading a text about innovations in transportation as part of the technology unit, buddies worked together to sort vehicles by speed. Because the goal of these activities was to foster conversation around the topic while using the vocabulary, we embedded "stop and talk" prompts that integrated the focal vocabulary (e.g., "Why does a rocket ship need to **accelerate** really fast?"). Teachers can similarly extend text through application activities that integrate key topic information and reading skills with the vocabulary, and draw on conversation prompts throughout the activity.

Strategy Instruction

Because the focus of the RB program was to promote both vocabulary acquisition and comprehension (of both text and videos) within the context of collaborative learning, two overall organizing strategies were used. One strategy was vocabulary related, and one was comprehension related.

Vocabulary Strategy

To help learners become proficient readers, the CCSS call upon students to determine the meaning of unknown words. ELLs can also draw on their first language knowledge to determine if the word is a cognate—which looks similar to another word in their first language and has a similar meaning—and confirm inferred word meanings with glossaries, dictionaries, and reference tools. The RB vocabulary strategy was designed to help students meet the CCSS demands of determining the meaning of words independently, and was composed of the following three steps: (1) pronounce, or say, the word, (2) explore the meaning of the word, and (3) try out the word in conversation and with more examples (see Figure 3).

Using this strategy, students were prompted to first say the word out loud and repeat it after the teacher. Then students were prompted to "explore" to find out about the word's meaning using glossaries or reference materials, or by looking at the textual context of the word. Students then extended their initial findings from "explore" in a "try it out" component, where they tried to expressively use the word or find other examples of the word (either in the text or through

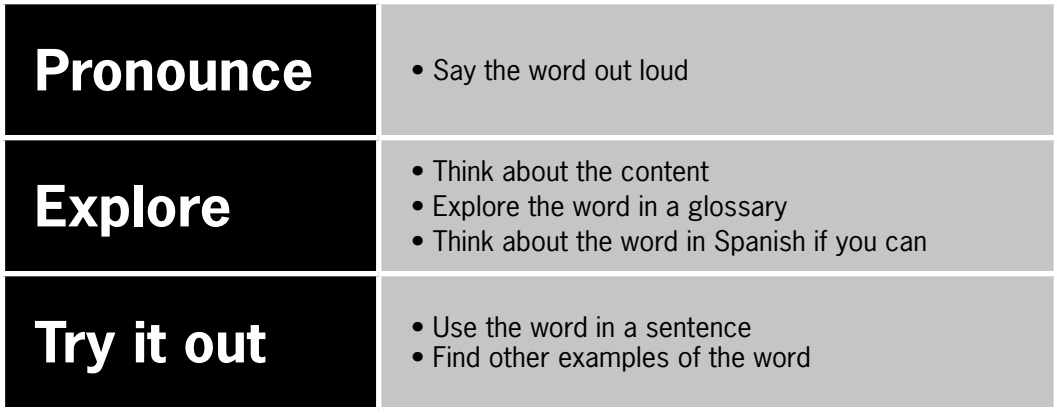

Figure 3. The Reading Buddies' Vocabulary Strategy

illustrations), and use the word in discussion. "You could check those glossaries," pointed out one Big Buddy when a Little Buddy showed confusion with a focal word during the application activity, "It says *atmosphere*. The atmosphere is air around the earth."

We also incorporated a minichecklist with the three components of the RB vocabulary strategy on the picture glossary entry (see minichecklist in Figure 1). Including the minichecklist of the strategy components reinforced the steps and fostered metacognitive behaviors related to student use of the strategy. In a recent RB session, a Big Buddy used the minichecklist to guide his explanation, "*Transporte* [Spanish word for transportation], good, excellent. Okay Little Buddy, can you check this off? We pronounced it, and we explored it."

Comprehension Strategy

The comprehension strategy developed for the RB program comprised three sequential steps taking place before, during, and after reading (or watching the video) and consisted of: (1) prepare to read/watch, (2) ask and answer questions during reading/watching, and (3) wrap it up with a summary at the end (see Figure 4 for a graphic organizer of the strategy). Teachers provided students with a graphic organizer similar to the one in Figure 4, which consisted of a brief explanation of the strategy component, language support, and boxes that students could check when they completed each component of the strategy while engaging with the text. Due to the short length of the texts (approximately 8 pages), we felt that students proficient with the skill of stopping to ask and answer questions would stop about three times in the text.

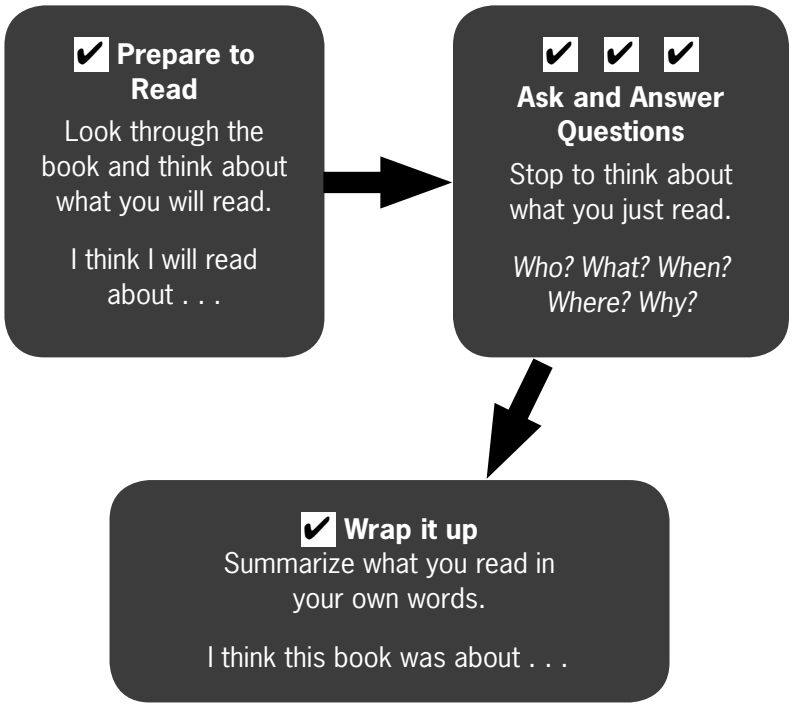

Figure 4. Reading Buddies Comprehension Strategy Graphic Organizer

The comprehension strategy took into account research-based practices (Kamil et al., 2008; Shanahan et al., 2010) related to reading strategy instruction, with the aim of fostering close reading of text as called for in the CCSS. The comprehension strategy was broad enough to be used for reading the texts, as well as guide a more structured and critical watching of the video lessons. Teachers may find a similar strategy to be useful for engaging students in reading comprehension strategies and guiding more structured watching of videos.

The purpose of the first part of the comprehension strategy, "prepare to read/watch," was to succinctly guide students to think about the topic in the book or video. Teachers provided students with a one- to two-sentence overview of the text/video (e.g., "this book is about the recycling process of glass bottles") and one sentence prompting them to read or watch in order to find out a piece of information (e.g., "read in order to find out why recycling is helpful to the environment"). Students then looked at the cover and some pictures in the story, read a brief description about the text, and thought about what they already knew about the topic. In the case of the video, screen shots were shown to students instead of text pictures.

The second part of the comprehension strategy, "ask and answer questions," indexed back to the CCSS standards related to student self-questioning in order to understand the key ideas and details of the text (or video). Teachers prompted students to stop at critical places in the text and ask and answer questions. Through initial modeling of this component, teachers provided students with question words (i.e., *who, what, when, where, why, how*) and gave examples of text-dependent questions students might ask.

While self-questioning during reading was at times challenging for the students, the peer interactions helped foster metacognitive behaviors related to this task, even for ELLs with more limited English proficiency. In one lesson about innovation with communication devices (as part of a unit on technology), a Big Buddy and Little Buddy were reading a text about ways to communicate with others to invite them to a party. "Now you can make a question about what we just read," the Big Buddy explained, "What question do you have?" When the Little Buddy showed confusion, the Big Buddy responded, "No, a question about what we just read. A question. It can be about this, what is this [points to a page in the book]? What kind of question could you say about it?" The Little Buddy continued to show confusion, which prompted the Big Buddy to walk the Little Buddy through the process of developing a text-dependent question.

To support learning and expose students to the focal words in another context, some text-dependent questions with the focal words were also embedded throughout the text (e.g., "What are some ways you could communicate a message to friends about an ice cream party?") and provided to students on the lesson overview checklist. These questions prompted students to discuss and clarify the meaning of the focal words in the context of the story. In one lesson, the Big Buddy explained, "What are some ways you could communicate a message to friends about an ice cream party? Do you know? What could you use to go talk to somebody and send a message?" The Little Buddy responded, "telephone." Later, in the same lesson, the Big Buddy asked the Little Buddy, "So do you understand what communicate means? Can you use it in a sentence?" The Little Buddy responded, "Communicate means to tell someone something," indicating that she had understood and possibly acquired the focal word.

Teachers might consider providing students similar text-specific prompts with the focal vocabulary on a checklist in addition to prompting students to devise their own questions at other places in the text/video. Scaffolds such as modeling, sentence frames, and question words may be needed when students are initially acquiring the technique of asking and answering questions.

The program integrated other components to foster close reading into the comprehension strategy. Teachers explained that finding evidence in the text can mean finding words in the text or other elements, such as pictures, and that finding evidence might directly address a question, while at other times the text evidence helps justify a textual inference. Once this instruction was modeled, scaffolds, such as reminders to answer "ask and answer" questions using "evidence from the text," were displayed in student workbook pages, checklist pages, and on PowerPoint slides. Also, to help students monitor their own reading, students were prompted to reflect on some reading "fix-up tips," or ways to assist comprehension, such as: pause, reread, look at the pictures, and use the vocabulary strategy for tricky words.

The third stage of the comprehension strategy was called "wrap it up with a summary." At this stage, teachers prompted students to summarize what they read/watched in their own words, with prompts eliciting student thinking about the main idea and important details. Students then summarized the story in pairs using a gist-like statement of one or two sentences. Finally, students then wrote down their summary so that they could have a record of it to help guide their younger tutee through developing an oral summary later.

To support student work in the same-age dyads, the teachers often read the first portion (approximately 3–4 pages) of the lesson's text aloud and modeled one of the reading fix-up tips. After the teacher demonstrated, he or she prompted students to read the rest of the text in their pairs and stop at critical junctures to ask and answer questions about the text. In the video lesson, teachers stopped the video halfway through so students could engage with the questioning technique in pairs. As in the text-based lessons, students were pretaught the focal vocabulary and asked to prepare to watch the video and wrap up the video-watching session in the same way.

Teacher and Peer Support

For teachers who want to regularly use extended peer interaction in their reading instruction, it is important to routinely monitor students to ensure the peer talk is productive. Teachers participating in the RB program monitored dyads using a three-part approach: observe, redirect, and encourage. Teachers first observed the buddy pairs to make sure the interaction was effective. If needed, they redirected misunderstandings and offered feedback, and they continued to encourage buddies to use the checklists and to talk and listen to each other. Timers redirected attention from the dyads to the front of the room, when necessary.

Students were encouraged to draw on all of their resources, including use of their first language, in the peer interaction. The ELL participants often code-switched and utilized their first language to support each other in learning. "Concentrate on this question," one Big Buddy said to the Little Buddy, "*¿Qué dice?*" (Spanish for "What does this say?").

Therefore, we carefully paired students to take into account language background and proficiency as well as whether the students were likely to work well together socially. After

experimenting with different pairing patterns, we ultimately paired proficient Big Buddies with limited-proficient Little Buddies and limited-proficient Big Buddies with proficient Little Buddies, a pattern that best supported the peer learning and facilitated teacher monitoring within the context of our program. However, other peer-learning programs have used different pairing patterns: In a same-aged peer tutoring program, for example, Van Keer and Verhaege (2005) split the classes in half based on language proficiency and paired a high student in the upper half of the class with a high student in the lower half so that teachers could better monitor the limited-proficient pairs. Teachers may want to experiment with different pairings to find the students who best work together and best facilitate each other's learning. While ELLs with limited English proficiency may benefit from language models of language-proficient peers, it is beneficial to validate the resources all students bring to the peer collaboration (Sáenz, Fuchs, & Fuchs, 2005).

Conclusion

Pedagogical practices we found to support ELLs as they navigate texts include: nonlinguistic support, utilization of the first language, integrated vocabulary and reading comprehension instruction, the use of multimedia, and scaffolded materials. Strategic peer-to-peer interaction helped scaffold student understanding because it facilitated their expressive use of the reading and vocabulary strategies, as well as metacognitive reading behaviors. Implemented in any classroom, these elements might aid ELLs as they access the rigorous content and language demands embedded in grade-level ELA CCSS (NGA & CCSSO, 2010a).

Reflection Questions and Action Plans

Reflection Questions

1. We suggest that integrating vocabulary instruction with reading comprehension in the context of peer learning is important for ELLs. To what degree have you observed this in your own teaching?
2. What elements discussed in this chapter do you see used to a high degree in your teaching context? Are there elements that you think should be implemented to a higher degree?
3. Text complexity has been increased in CCSS-based ELA curricula. Given this shift, what are instructional techniques to help scaffold some of the language demands for ELLs?
4. How might text sets with an inclusion of multimedia components foster language development in ELLs?

Action Plans

- Guide students through reading comprehension strategies within meaningful and authentic literacy activities.
- Help students develop not only reading comprehension skills, but self-regulating metacognitive reading skills that they can draw on for reading complex texts.
- Integrate strategic vocabulary instruction into reading activities.

- Choose general academic and domain-specific words that are useful for students to learn for academic success, but likely to be unknown by the students without the additional instructional support.
- Integrate peer-to-peer learning into literacy and reading activities to help foster active engagement with reading.
- Use a variety of grouping patterns for peer learning so students experience learning from many students.
- Think about the students in your classroom. What kinds of activities could you use to engage them in peer interaction and how could you pair them to assist those students who need greater support?
- Look at some of your curricular materials. What words would you target for vocabulary instruction? Why did you choose those words? What activities would you employ to target those words in an active and robust manner?

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