

A synthesis and discussion of robert t. jimenez's article "a delicate balance"

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The challenge for every ESL classteacheris to build literacy, develop written expression ability and enhancing English language of students. The article describes effective reading instruction for ESL students based on observations conducted in various classrooms over a period of two years.

The approach to theobservationand the framework for analysis were based on (a) the research on second language learning and bilingualeducation, (b) the contemporary research base on effective literacy instruction, and (c) general principles of effective instruction for low-income students.

The researchers integrated these three knowledge bases with what they observed in the classrooms and the result is a framework of constructs for effective instruction for language minority students. This construct consists of the following: challenge, involvement, involvement, success, scaffolding/cognitive strategies, mediation/feedback, collaborative/cooperative learning, techniques for second language acquisition/sheltered English, andrespectforcultural diversity.

These constructs, according to the researchers, are useful when considering practices and strategies in teaching and promoting literacy among ESL students. For instance, knowledge on scaffolding when introducing new vocabulary to ESL students would increase retention and subsequent use of these new words.

Instead of simply defining a word, the teacher could use several of the techniques mentioned in the article like focusing students' attention on character clues and using these clues not just in understanding the new

word but comprehension of the text, too. The variety would make vocabulary learning an enjoyable experience for students.

Another example by which the research could be applied and make a difference in real-life teaching is the idea that the teacher should try to incorporate all areas of literacy instruction while using one text lesson. The article indicates that the teacher should crisscross the instructional landscape in a wide range of oral and written activities. This would ensure that students not only thoroughly practice their language and literacy skills, but keeping the focus on one text would increase the chance of retention.