

Montclair State University
READ 399 and READ 500 NCATE Assignment Guidelines:
Tailoring Planning for Literacy Instruction to the Needs of an English
Language Learner (ELL)

In preparation for the following assignment, please carefully read the following assigned readings on Blackboard:

Lucas, T., Villegas, A. & Freedson, M. (2008). Linguistically responsive teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 59(4). (pp 1-9)

P. Smiley & T. Salsberry (2007). *Effective Schooling for English Language Learners*. Chapter 2: Second Language Acquisition and Instructional Strategies.

Please read the following case:

Elsa is a seven-year-old 2nd grader and English Language Learner (ELL). She lives in an apartment in a small city in New Jersey with her older brother, little sister, and parents, who moved from Mexico to the United States just before she was born. Since kindergarten, Elsa has attended her neighborhood public school where she qualifies for the free lunch program and for ESL pullout services. Elsa's teachers describe her as "always punctual, and ready to listen and learn." They also state that Elsa is a "good friend" and "works well with others." Her current teacher, Ms. Smith, describes her as "shy" but believes Elsa could participate in class more since she speaks basic conversational English, usually expressing herself in short phrases and simple sentences. Elsa's parents speak, read and write almost exclusively in Spanish at home and, with the exception of the children's schoolwork, most of the print in Elsa's home (a few books, magazines, store coupons, etc.) is in Spanish. Because there are many other Hispanic children at school, Elsa is able to speak both Spanish and English with her peers. On the other hand, the instructional program and all of the literacy materials in Elsa's classroom are in English, though Elsa's teacher knows some Spanish from having studied it in high school and college. Elsa attends an afterschool program where she completes her homework, returns home typically to a family dinner, playtime with her siblings, and bedtime at 9:00. Elsa states that she loves playing on the computer at her afterschool program and while she doesn't watch much television, she says that her favorite shows are Dora and Diego on Nickelodeon. She also loves anything having to do with animals.

Ms. Smith has recently begun using a "Reading Workshop" methodology in her classroom. During her literacy block, some students read independently while Ms. Smith meets with small groups for supported reading. This week, students are reading the Magic Tree House book, *Afternoon on the Amazon* by Mary Pope Osborne (1995). Yesterday the teacher briefly introduced the book to the class and read aloud from the first two chapters, in which the main characters, Jack and Annie, returned to their magic tree house and got whisked away to a distant rain forest. Today, students in Elsa's group are asked to read the next chapter independently (see attached text) and Ms. Smith notices Elsa reading quietly to herself. During small group time (Elsa is in a group with 1

other ELL and 4 native English speakers), Ms. Smith has planned an “Everybody Read To” activity, which involves students taking turns reading portions of the text aloud and responding to the teacher’s questions, some literal and some inferential. During Elsa’s turn, Ms. Smith notes Elsa’s decoding and fluency. Beginning on p.12, Elsa reads as follows:

“Jack open her eyes. The air was hot and stormy. It look like we land in some bushes (mispronounced). ...They had land in a sea of shiny (mispronounced) green leaves.”

Elsa also miscues on the words “bright” (read as “bridge”) and “weird” (could not determine word). Otherwise, she is able to read the text correctly, though haltingly. When she finishes reading halfway down p. 13, Ms. Smith asks Elsa if she can figure out where the tree house has landed. Elsa hesitates, then responds with uncertainty, “In the sea?” Ms. Smith is bewildered by this response but reminds Elsa to use the illustrations to help her understand the text. After other children determine that Jack and Annie are high up in the treetops, the teacher asks Elsa what we call the three layers of the rainforest. Elsa looks at the text, says “thick treetops”, and then seems at a loss. When asked why she thinks the title of Chapter 3 is “Yikes!”, Elsa just smiles nervously and shrugs. Ms. Smith, who thought that this text would be so easy for Elsa to understand, now wonders how she can help Elsa get more out of this reading experience.

In reference to the above case, and drawing on the above readings and other course materials, please respond to the following questions in the form of a 5-6 page (double-spaced) well-crafted essay. Number each section of your response accordingly:

1. Using your knowledge of literacy development and English Language Learners, describe in one or two paragraphs what you see happening in this vignette. Be sure to distinguish between what we DO and DO NOT know about Elsa based on this brief snapshot. Also, be careful to describe, not judge, what you see here.
2. Drawing on your readings, what are the most important issues to consider in Elsa’s case given what we know about Elsa, literacy development and principles of effective instruction for ELLs? (Discuss at least 4 different issues you see as relevant here, elaborating on each in detail, and referencing at least 2 of the articles you have read on ELL literacy).
3. Based on your careful analysis of the attached Magic Tree House text, what are the specific challenges Elsa faces in comprehending this particular book chapter. What kinds of language and literacy demands does this text make on a reader learning English as a second language. What knowledge and skills does Elsa need to succeed with the assigned literacy tasks.
4. If you were Ms. Smith, how would you modify your instructional plans for independent reading and for the small group supported reading lesson so as to facilitate Elsa’s reading comprehension and language development. Be sure that your plan responds to many of the issues and challenges you identified in parts 1, 2 and 3 above in order to make this reading experience successful for Elsa.