REFLECTIVE STATEMENT: VOCABULARY ACQUISITION LESSON PLAN

SLO 1: Demonstrate advanced understanding of the trends, issues, and research associated with education in general and with their respective specialization.

Relevance

As I designed this Vocabulary Acquisition lesson plan for EDU 542, I was just beginning the process of studying of the New Learning Sciences and the theoretical basis for lesson plans of this type. Research on vocabulary acquisition has demonstrated that in order for students to achieve mastery of a word, they must be able to accurately articulate their own understanding of it (Estes, Mintz, & Gunter, 2011). Learning scientists concur that articulation is an important skill for students who are learning new concepts or acquiring new knowledge (Sawyer, 2006). In addition to the emphasis on articulation, the lesson also addresses students' higher-order thinking skills and creativity, both of which are crucial to academic excellence in the 21st century (P21 Framework, 2009). Therefore, this lesson plan capitalizes on the available research to bring students a learning experience that is based on best-practice techniques and is geared toward higher achievement.

In this particular lesson, I included a variety of activities through which students could gain more exposure to and practice with the new vocabulary. I addressed students' receptive and productive language skills, as they spend time considering and processing the new words, listening for and identifying their use in the story, and synthesizing their understanding through the creation of original artwork. The acquisition of new vocabulary should result in students "owning" each word, which means they are able to understand it in context, use it appropriately, and describe the features that comprise its meaning. Finally, the use of songs (and the accompanying motions) in future instruction not only allows for review of the vocabulary and concepts, but also provides students with kinesthetic and auditory exposure to them. The various strategies used in this lesson are conducive to eventual ownership of each word, and stimulate students' creativity in the process.

Significance

The Vocabulary Acquisition model represents a necessary shift from outdated methods of teaching vocabulary. Among these are drilling/memorization lists, frequent spelling tests, and isolation of each word from a meaningful context. Instead, this model emphasizes constructivist techniques, such as connecting new content to prior knowledge, teacher facilitation of vocabulary-rich conversations, and discovering patterns of meaning among relevant words (Estes, Mintz, & Gunter, 2011). Doing this will lead students to a fuller understanding of the English language as a whole, which will equip them with the skill to continue learning as they integrate new knowledge into their existing conceptual framework. As a teacher, I will need to rely on these techniques to keep students engaged in learning, and to guide them to the most favorable learning outcomes.

This lesson plan also builds students' knowledge foundations by integrating content from other curricular areas, specifically social studies (standard 4.1.5). By concurrently studying maps and geography in a social studies unit, students can use their knowledge in that area to create more advanced maps for this math lesson. Clearly, Vocabulary Acquisition also links math with language arts, which has tremendous benefit for English learners. Addressing the needs of ELLs and integrating across the curriculum are both skills of immense importance for teachers.

Concerning preparation for high-stakes tests, this lesson is helpful for the following types of learning:

- The ability to read and interpret charts, graphs, and maps
- Interpretation of cartoons, illustrations, and other textual aids
- A working knowledge of content-related concepts, including vocabulary, phrases, and proper names (Estes, Mintz, & Gunter, 2011, p. 16)

Students receive practice with maps and illustrations through the *Sir Cumference* story, as they will identify the allusions to the new vocabulary found throughout the story and will create their own illustrations that resemble those in the book. Knowledge of the relevant vocabulary is a critical feature of this lesson; by the end students will be able to answer questions regarding the characteristics of each type of angle and line using appropriate academic terminology.

The Vocabulary Acquisition lesson model is highly useful in the classroom because it represents a departure from more traditional, less effective techniques for vocabulary instruction, and it is more aligned with contemporary understandings of how people learn. As such, it is most practical at or near the beginning of a new unit, when vocabulary terms that are foundational to the concepts to be learned should be acquired. Strengths of this model, according to Estes, Mintz, and Gunter (2011), are its connections to previous learning, its conduciveness to scaffolding, and its openness to cross-cultural connections (p. 231). These can be seen in the way students offer their best guesses or suppositions about the content, receive guidance from the teacher, and practice identifying and using the terms.

Adaptations/Accommodations for Advanced, ELD and IEP learners:

- **Advanced**: Compare your map of "Angleland" with a topographical map of California. Which elements are similar, and which are missing? To which parts of California is it most analogous? (Depth & complexity: across the disciplines)
- **ELD**: In a small group, complete a word study worksheet that emphasizes discrimination between the different types of angles and lines. Possible activities include fill-in-the-blank using a word bank, matching words with pictures, and writing original sentences using the target words.
- **IEP**: Complete a graphic organizer that includes the target English word, its roots, an example sentence, and an original drawing that captures its essence.

Link to Theory

How does this lesson support the Behaviorist learning theory?

The connections between behaviorist learning theory and the Vocabulary Acquisition model are not overt. However, the assessments and activities in this model revolve around the creation of an environment that is conducive to deep learning, and hinges upon students developing a "joy of language" (Estes, Mintz, & Gunter, 2011, p. 215). Intrinsic rewards, such as joy or satisfaction, are still rewards. Teachers can cultivate this type of motivation by inviting students into a conversation that invites them into deeper understanding and appreciation of the language at hand. The pretest at the outset of the lesson will elicit a wide range of responses from students, but the goal is for all students to exhibit the same responses (or behaviors) and to demonstrate the same level of measurable learning on the posttest at the conclusion of the lesson. This notion of starting with a stimulus and ending with a desired response is the most apparent link to behaviorism found within this lesson model.

To which Big Ideas can this lesson be linked?

This lesson can clearly be linked to Ormrod's Big Idea #2: *Learning is more likely to occur when learners pay attention to the information to be learned.* The lesson begins with an advance organizer on the aspects of angles and lines that have recently been learned. The subsequent advance organizer, which is shown after the pretest, presents a diagram

that reveals the new words to be mastered. The lesson's methodical approach to acquiring vocabulary allows students to focus intently on each word and its relevance to the concepts they are studying.

How does this lesson connect with the New Learning Sciences?

One way in which the Vocabulary Acquisition model links to the New Learning Sciences is through their shared emphasis on deepening students' conceptual understanding (Sawyer, 2006). One of the aims of this model is to lead students into a deeper understanding of language as a whole, as opposed to requiring them to memorize a list of isolated, non-contextualized words. Through this model, students can develop word recognition skills that will allow them to identify semantic relationships between words and accurately infer meanings of new words. Ideally, they will discover a feeling of joy over learning more about language, and will become fascinated with words to the point that they pursue deeper understanding using the learning tools with which they have been equipped.

Specifically in this lesson plan, students learn to connect word roots with their mathematical applications (e.g., *acute* means to sharpen; acute angles have the sharpest point). After this lesson, students may begin to wonder which other math terms have similar connections between their word roots and their meanings. They will undoubtedly feel accomplished if they are able to discern the meaning of a previously unknown math term simply by using the word roots. This kind of mental exercise will facilitate the aforementioned 'joy of language,' and should be encouraged after a lesson of this nature.

What curricular or technological resources have been useful in designing this lesson?

The most useful resource I found was the children's story about Sir Cumference, which I had read to an ELD class during a subbing assignment. I enjoyed the book's clever math applications and engaging storytelling, so I decided it would be useful for creating student engagement in a math lesson. It also helped to enrich the lesson by adding avenues for integration across the curriculum. Another valuable resources was a Google search, which I used to find the image of the house that would be used to help students identify the different types of angles and lines in a real-life setting, as well as the "Hidden Angles" worksheet attached at the end of the lesson. Finally, PowerPoint was a helpful software resource for designing an attractive and useful advance organizer.

Resources/Technology

Interactive web programs

- YouTube link
- Spotify/iTunes: "Parallel or Perpendicular" by Rockin' the Standards

Professional Actions/Areas for Growth

By designing a lesson plan using the Vocabulary Acquisition model, I have elevated my competence in the area of teaching vocabulary systematically and creatively. While students will benefit most from this revolutionary approach to teaching vocabulary, I have also benefitted from growing in my understanding of how students acquire language and how teachers can catalyze the process. Effective teachers must now be equipped to teach students of all linguistic backgrounds, and the Vocabulary Acquisition model provides an avenue by which teachers can reach students of all competencies.

I would enjoy trying this lesson in other subject areas as well, as math vocabulary tends to have very specific applications. A social studies unit may have clearer links to other content areas or to students' personal lives. Making content relevant and applicable is among the

objectives of the Common Core State Standards, and is recognized as a skill suitable for 21st century learning. Also, cultivating linguistic skills in each content area is critical to the CCSS, so achieving competence with this lesson model should be of high importance. Developing these skills would lead me to greater proficiency as an educator who prepares students to be lifelong learners.