Visuals are frequently suggested as an element of instruction for learning a second language. So, what is the most effective usage of visuals to teach academic vocabulary? Generally, the term "visuals" is usually interpreted by teachers as arrays of pictures on classroom bulletin boards as well as various types of graphic organizers. These are great ideas, however, more is needed to emphasize academic vocabulary. Pictures can provide powerful and effective instructional strategies to aid second language learners' acquisition of academic words, terms and phrases (Cummins, 1994).

Picture Books

Picture books are commonly used by teachers to build "images from words" (guided imagery) and prediction skills as students listen to a story. Often these picture books are of the narrative genre. Since most picture books are not particularly long neither in their number of pages nor in the text per page, reading them takes little time.

Connecting to a cultural aspect such as storytelling (Au, 1993) is the basis for teaching second language learner students the elements of writing a story. Building on an idea which is well-known to students begins the process of transition to another level of understanding. This concept is key to advancing second language learners from a good conversational language level to an academic language level.

Utilizing picture books to teach writing is a powerful concept for learners in the area of academic concepts. Picture books can serve as models of narrative writing. Teaching that each story has the components of "Beginning," "Middle," and "Ending" (BME) builds a basic academic writing concept. There are a variety of strategies that can be utilized to internalize this understanding. Teachers can testify that students generally launch into writing about the "Middle" without a solid

"Beginning" and often do not include an "Ending." Here are some tips which help second-language learner students to better understand how simple picture books model good story writing:

■ Begin to read a story at the "Middle" and continue to the end of the book. Then stop and ask the class, "What's wrong? Didn't you like the story?" Discuss how the "Beginning" of a story is important for establishing key story elements. This example can be likened to arriving late to see a movie!

■ This time, read a story and stop before the "Ending." Follow-up with the same type of questions.

Another way to emphasize the need for beginning, middle and ending in a story is through picture book posters. The poster series of the book, *The Mysteries of Harris Burdick* (Van Allsburg, 1996) is perfect for this activity. Each poster in this portfolio has a picture with a caption.

■ First of all, groups of three or triads are assigned

■ Each triad group receives one poster

■ It is up to each triad group to create a beginning which leads to the poster idea as the middle of the story, and then, generating an ending.

■ The group is to develop separate scripts for each story element (BME). All members must participate with generating ideas and writing. Again, the poster becomes the "Middle" of the story and the "Beginning" and "Ending" are to be produced by the group. As the triad is composed of three members, each will present one part of the scripted story.

■ Finally that the groups take turns presenting their individual stories based on one poster. Each group has its members share their part of the story, in BME order, to the rest of the class. This activity also generates a team building strategy as each member of the group has an individual responsibility (Kinsella, 1996). Script writing, speaking and listening skills are also integrated in this strategy.

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Academic Words

Helen Garcia Rockett explores strategies for using picture books and other graphics to stimulate the development of academic vocabulary in second language learners

At all grade levels, instructional practices which integrate many teaching points in one strategy are ideal. A strategy that also embeds motivation is a bonus, as is the case when using picture books/children's literature to present complicated subjects or topics to learners. An example would be to utilize the book *Click Clack Moo: Cows That Type* (Cronin, 2001) which takes about five to ten minutes to read. In short, the story is about a farmer who receives demands from his farm animals. It quickly and concisely emphasizes labor union issues for secondary students in a social studies/economic course. The book is also suitable for model note-writing for all grade levels. The pictures/illustrations add an element of "fun" to this strategy.

The following lists more examples of children's literature which present academic concepts:

■ *Rose Blanche* (Innocenti, 1985) — World War II from the German perspective (great as an introduction to Story of Ann Frank)

■ *The Faithful Elephants* (Tsuchiya, 1997) — World War II from the Japanese perspective

■ *Nine for California* (Levitin, 1996) — Travel during the gold rush, geography across the nation and words/expressions from the days of the Old West

■ *George Washington Carver* (Bolden, 2008) — The son of a slave becomes a university scientist, teaches the scientific method and vocabulary terms

■ *Inch and Miles: The Journey to Success* (Wooden, 2003) — Wisdom on personal success traits from a notable basketball coach

■ *Just Me and 6,000 Rats* (Walton, 2007) — Conjunctions

■ *Up, Up and Away: A Book about Adverbs* (Heller, 1991)

■ *The Great Kapok Tree* (Cherry, 1990) — Rainforest and political issues

■ *Grandfather Tang's Story* (Tompert, 1990) — Tangrams for math or art

■ *Animalia* (Base, 1986) — Alliteration in ABC order and labeling (a great amount of pictures representing vocabulary words which all start with the same letter — not sound — per page)

This list will give you a good start, but there are so many other great children's literature books for teaching comprehension of academic topics and vocabulary.

This next strategy is described as "wringing a book dry." In other words, using just one book to bring out every possible useful teaching point contained in a picture book. Some teaching point suggestions are:

■ Character descriptors

■ Setting descriptors

■ Word sounds to practice phonics

■ Word "endings" (-ing, -ed, - ies, s, es)

■ Compound words

■ Repetitive phrases (which students soon catch on to as the teacher reads aloud and often join in saying the phrase each time it occurs in the story)

■ Parts of speech (have the students raise their hands when they hear a verb or adjective and mix them up page-by-page)

■ Compare the beginning and ending of the story

■ Noting words with a certain number of syllables

■ Discussing/writing a new ending

■ Creating a sequel to a story either as a class or small group or individually

Each story has many attributes that can become teaching points. Drawing out these points adds another facet to understanding academic vocabulary.

Classroom Strategy

Diagrams

Telling a story and drawing a diagram while labeling important features of the subject leads to a different level of teaching academic vocabulary (Bechtel, 2004; Readence & Bean, 2004). Again, connecting to a second language learner via storytelling creates a "cultural comfort zone." With the help of a diagram, it becomes the basis for learning academic vocabulary.

Here is an example of utilizing a diagram in this manner:

1. Lightly outline the figure to be discussed in pencil (Bullhead Shark) on a banner-size piece of butcher paper. It should be almost as large as the display area at the front of the classroom.

2. Display the banner at the front of the classroom so that all students can easily see it from all seating areas.

3. Use a marker pen to begin outlining the large dorsal fin (1st Dorsal fin), label it and then ask: "What is the first thing you would see if a shark approach you?" During discussion, relate some details from movies familiar to students.

4. Continue outlining, labeling the important parts of the shark, and citing true stories about bullhead sharks. This strategy maintains interest and interaction with the academic vocabulary labeling process. The storytelling element aids in embedding long-term memory of the labeled words through association with the diagram visual.

5. Citing facts not commonly known enhances the learning of new vocabulary as well. For instance, the bullhead shark has a type of bladder that absorbs salt which sustains this shark's survival in freshwater for a long period of time. This type of shark has been found in the northern part of the Mississippi River and in many rivers in South America.

This technique enables a second language learner to experience an entertaining presentation while learning academic vocabulary that may be used in a future unit of study. Student comprehension of key terms/vocabulary for a subject area is critical to meaningful instruction.

Picture Play

The academic concept of categorization can easily be taught by grouping pictures with like attributes. A collection of various types of pictures can be gathered from magazines, advertisements, or brochures. The picture collection can be randomly selected for this activity. In large mailer envelopes, place 15 to 20 pictures per envelope. Each envelope contains different pictures so that each group has a unique categorization experience.

Next, the teacher models the process of categorization by thinking aloud — verbalizing the thinking process while generating clusters/categories from a group of pictures. Pictures can be categorized by colors, such as separating black-and-white pictures from pictures with more colors. Not all pictures need to be utilized in assembling categories. The pictures may also be used repeatedly while generating different types of categories.

Second language learners are very creative during this exercise. Here are some sample categories:
- Inanimate/animate objects
- Size or shape
- Articles used in certain jobs
- By topics such as: circus, rainforest, outer space
After modeling the Picture Play activity:
- Assemble small groups of three to four students
- Each group receives an envelope with pictures

- Each group must designate a recorder
- Designate a time period (15 minutes is sufficient)
- Students begin to generate categories as a team. The recorder participates and lists the categories on a sheet of paper
- At the end of the time period, each student group shares their list of categories

Picture Play initiates conversation, teamwork and motivation while learning about the academic concept of categorization. This concept is a vital component of vocabulary relationships which impacts overall reading comprehension.

Carousel of Pictures for Grammar and Main Theme

Another interactive strategy is the Carousel Go-Round activity, which harnesses the power of pictures to establish prior knowledge and prediction of a forthcoming instructional topic. This activity may be implemented with a small group setting or whole-class interaction.

To start with, collect about 20 pictures on a single theme. One example would be to gather pictures of various places in Hawaii which will lead to the theme of study: the Hawaiian Islands. This number of pictures is effective to produce good practice for students. File folders are assembled which open and have a picture attached to the top section and a lined piece of paper attached to the bottom part. The picture folders "travel" between small groups of students. The instructions are very simple:

1. Write a sentence about what you see in the picture (or a question, or generate a quote from a picture display of people or animals, etc.)

2. Write a sentence for each picture displayed around the room.

3. Write your initials after the sentence that you write.

4. If you are waiting to add your sentence about a picture, please read the sentences already posted. This will help you to think of something different to say about the picture.

5. When all group members have finished writing a sentence for each picture, please raise your hands.

These same directions can be modified to display pictures around the room with a piece of paper attached per picture (Bechtel, 2001). The students are instructed to go to each picture and follow the directions which are posted on the board or another display area.

After everyone has completed their task in the Carousel activity, the instructor asks: "What do you think we are going to study this week?" This initiates the academic concept of "thematic relationships." This strand of "connections" begins the critical thinking skills of synthesis, analysis and evaluation — a key to academic reading comprehension.

Another step to this strategy is to take all the pictures and written samples and assemble them into a "book" which can be added to the classroom library. This encourages the academic concept of "re-reading" as a foundation for second language learners to increase reading fluency. Fluency in reading develops faster word recognition in a more automatic manner. As "automaticity" in reading develops, students have more time to focus on academic vocabulary found in any content area reading materials.

Maintain the Momentum

Clearly, there are a variety of instructional strategies using "visuals" to teach academic vocabulary which integrate reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. In addition, the presented activities include the extra element of "fun" as a factor to increase long-term memory of new ideas and

words. Strategies such as these encourage second language learners to become curious about vocabulary not commonly used in conversation. As educators we must strive to embed this curiosity in our students.)(

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Helen Garcia Rockett (hgrockett@csupomona.edu) is an assistant professor at California State Polytechnic University, Pomona — Department of Education. She has taught all grade levels at various public schools and has also conducted professional development for teachers and parents with an emphasis on literacy for English Learners.