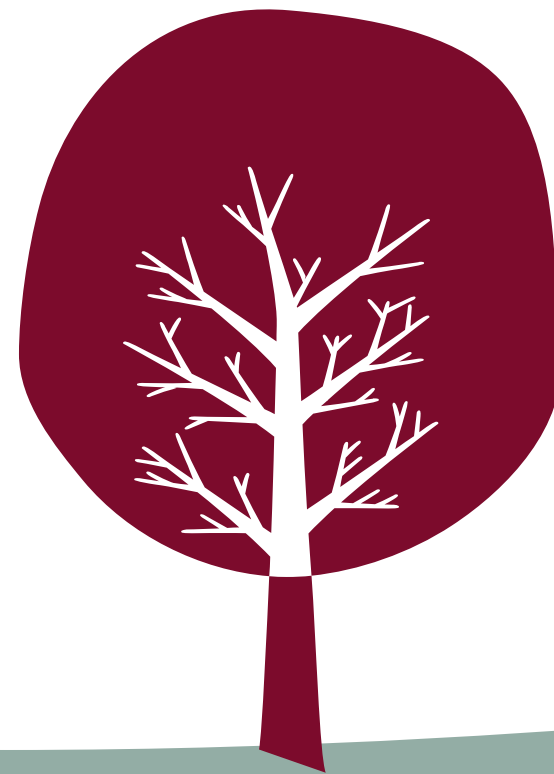
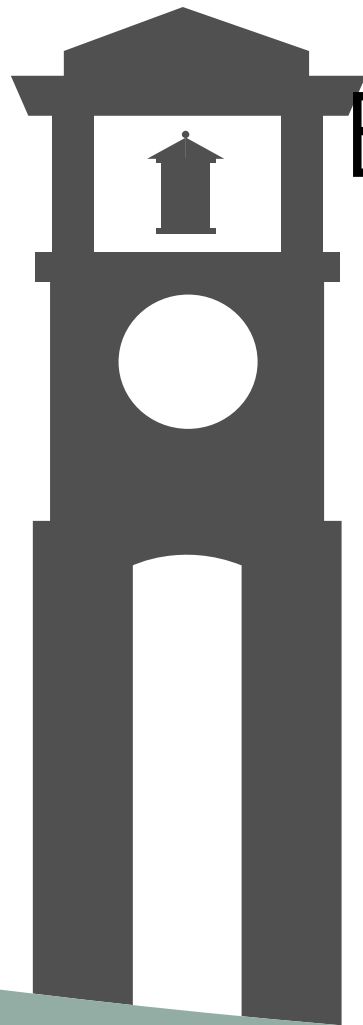
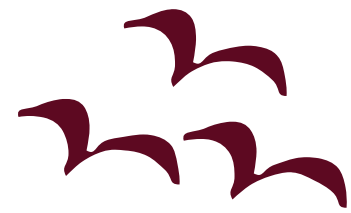


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Aprendiendo en inglés:

Understanding the Complexities
of Classroom Pedagogy for
English Learners in Rural Wisconsin

Matt McParker
WITESOL Conference
Nov. 8, 2025



Agenda

Background & Introductions

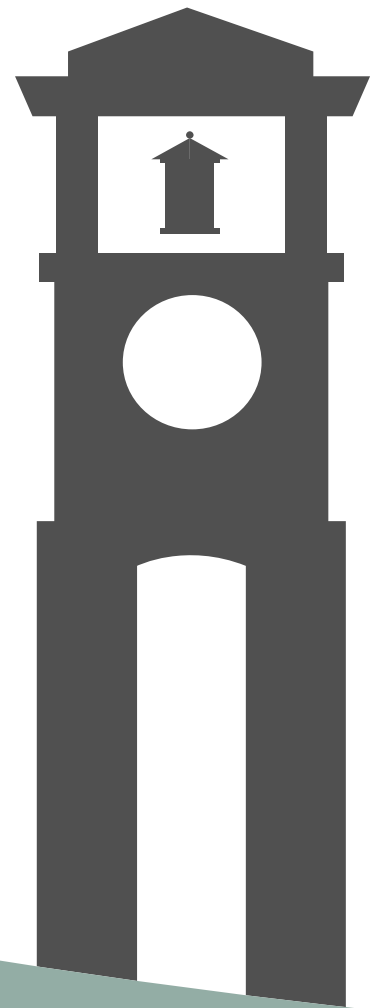
Context

Justification

Research

Findings

Discussion



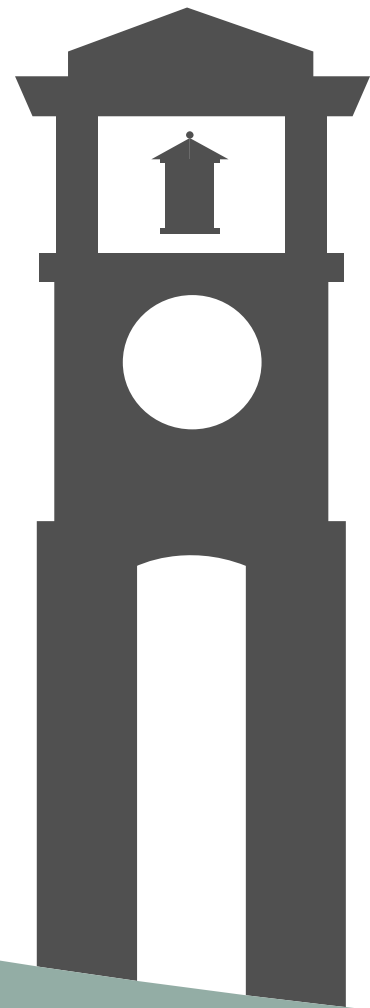
Background & Introductions

Who are we?

Why are we here?

What do we hope to get out of this session?

- Faculty Research Grant (w/ Dr. J.C. Wagner-Romero)
- Interested in supporting our Preservice Teachers in working with multilingual learners (MLs)
- Curious about effective approaches for MLs, especially in rural settings
- (Comparatively) limited opportunities to work with MLs in the area around UWL
- Arcadia though...

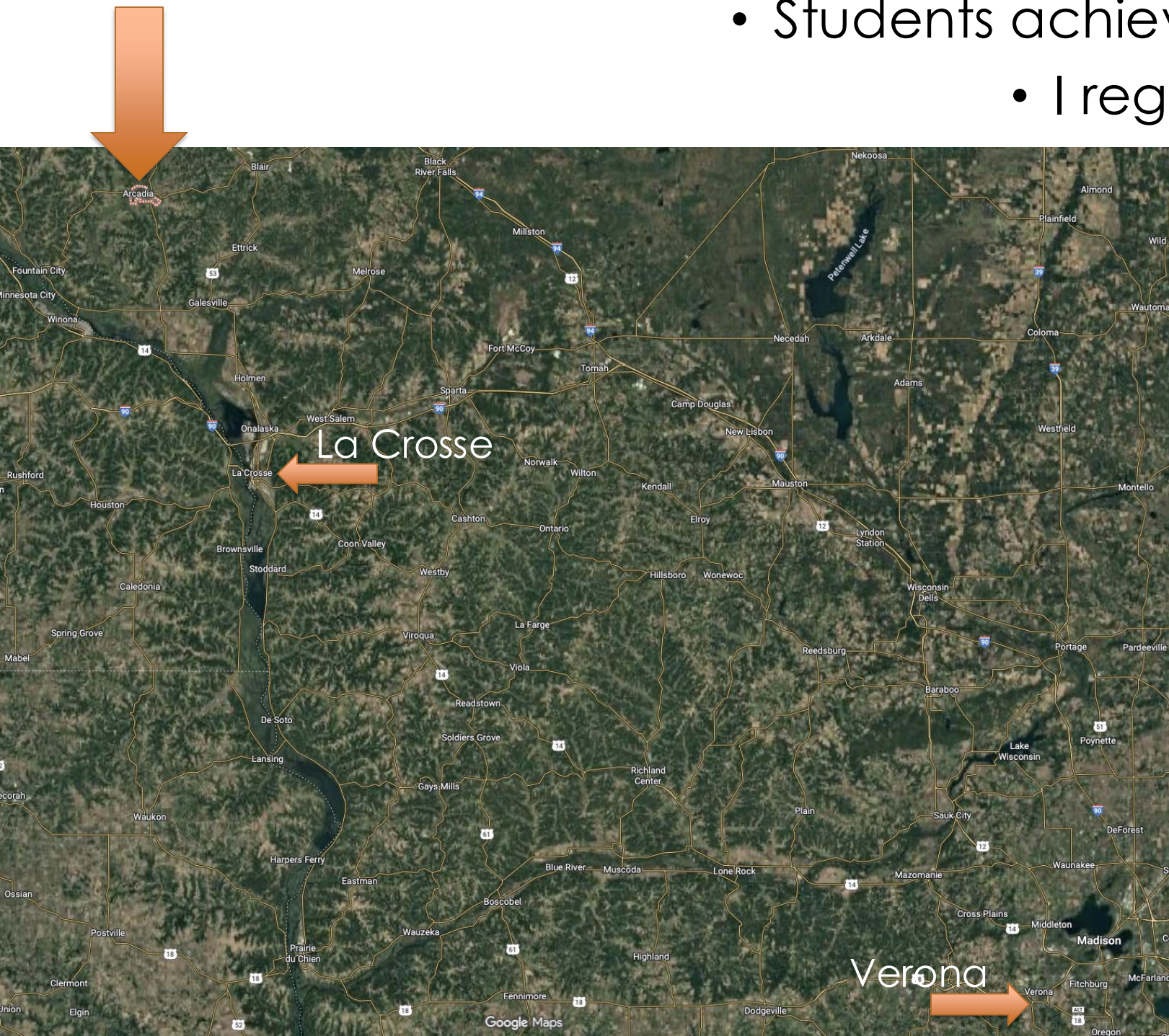


Context

Arcadia, Wisconsin

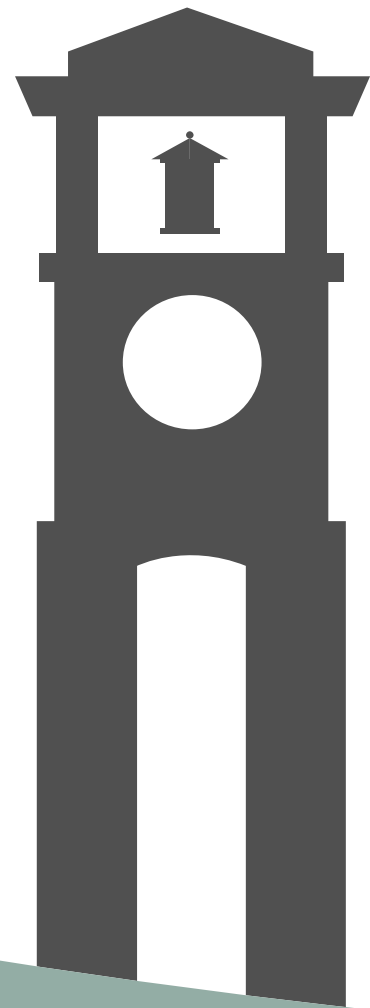
- School District – 77% Hispanic or Latino, 42.6% English Learners
- Elementary School – 85.1% Hispanic or Latino, 52.5% English Learners
- Students achieve at similar levels to their English-only peers (Wisconsin DPI, 2024)
- I regularly supervise student teachers at Arcadia Elementary
- UWL graduates are teaching at Arcadia Elementary
 - Rural setting
(geographically isolated & low population density)

Arcadia



Justification (Literature Review)

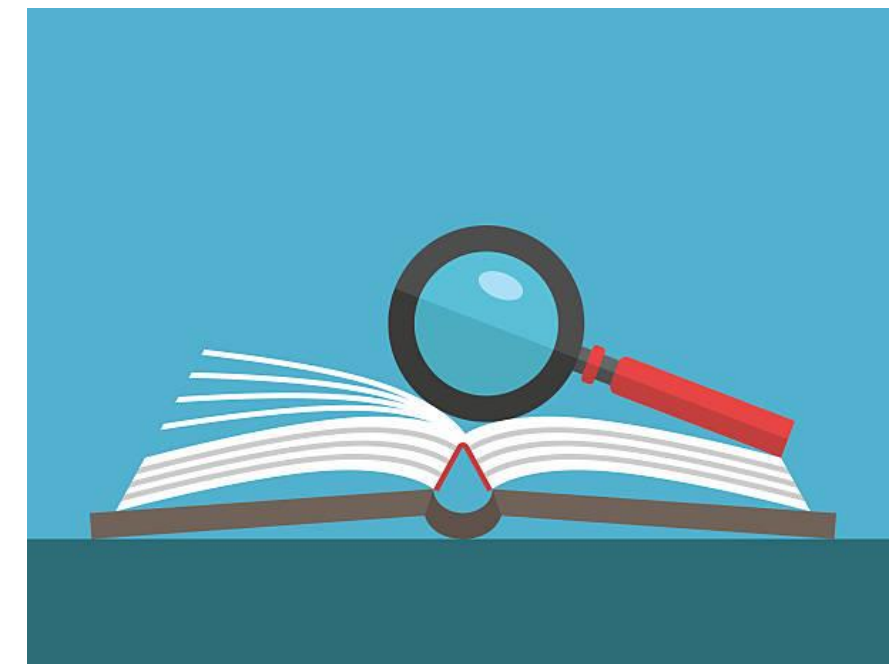
- Most MLs attend urban or suburban schools (NCES, 2023)
- Most research is focused on MLs in urban settings (Lee & Hawkins, 2015)
- Rural schools face unique challenges – limited proper tax, few PD opportunities, lack of teachers with TESOL training (NREA, 2016)
- Effective educational approaches in rural settings differ from those in urban and suburban settings (Lee & Hawkins, 2015)
- Little research on effective approaches for MLs in rural settings (lots on what *should* be done) (Coady et al., 2019; Shealy, 2022)
- What strategies and approaches are effective teachers implementing for MLs in a rural, bilingual setting?



Participants & Methods

(recommended by ESL teacher)

(case study)



- Allison (pseudonym)
- Kindergarten classroom
- 13th year teaching
 - Mostly 4K (one year 3rd grade, 2nd year in K)
 - Masters Degree, Reading & TESOL licenses
- Stephanie (pseudonym)
- 2nd grade classroom
- 3rd year teaching
 - UWL grad w/ TESOL
 - Working toward reading license
- 10 observations (with detailed notes)
 - at various times of day in different subjects, some scheduled ahead-of-time, some *not*
- Semi-formal interviews (transcribed)
- Identified themes in observation notes and interview transcriptions
 - Tried to describe teacher actions
- Identified overlapping themes



Inviting & Supportive
Environment

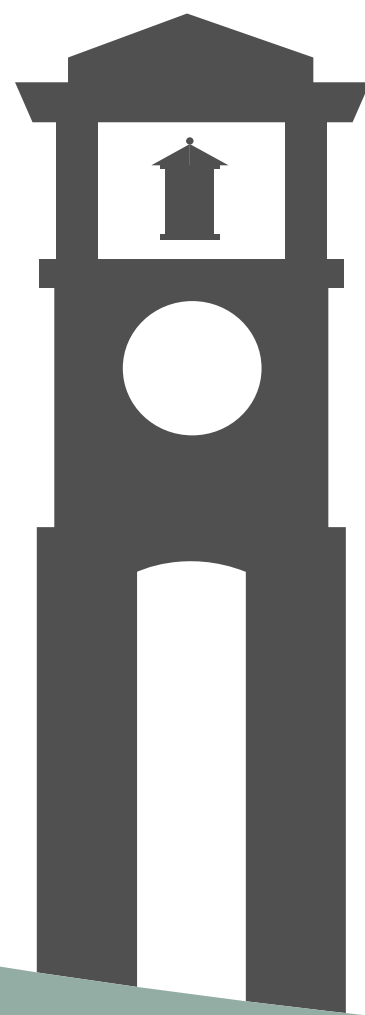
Strategies

Themes

Emphasis on
Language Use

Preparation

Student-Oriented
Supports



Interview 1

- Manipulatives
- Turn-and-talk/language use/opportunities to talk
- Save questions until the end
- Post-it notes/parking lot for questions
- Modified workbook pages, supporting language
- Posters for parts of speech
- Tailored assessments
- Responsive groups
- Exit slips
- SPLIT strategy
- Leveled instruction

Strategies

- Affirming, proactive messages
- Building background knowledge, schema
- Choice
- Choral response
- Community-focused discussion & acknowledgement
- Completing sentences/ fill-in-the-blank
- Manipulatives
- Music & art integration
- Proximity/circulation
- Repeat-after-me
- Repetition
- Think-pair-share
- Total physical response
- Translation
- Structured, clear directions
- Students acting out concepts
- Verbal feedback
- Visuals
- Vocabulary work

Interview 2

- Keys to Literacy
- Science of reading
- Project Respect
- Visuals, labels
- Translation
- Video
- Turn-and-talk
- Movement
- Acting out concepts (several examples)
- Play-based learning
- Gradual release of responsibility
- Spiral curriculum (coming back to concepts)
- Targeted assessments



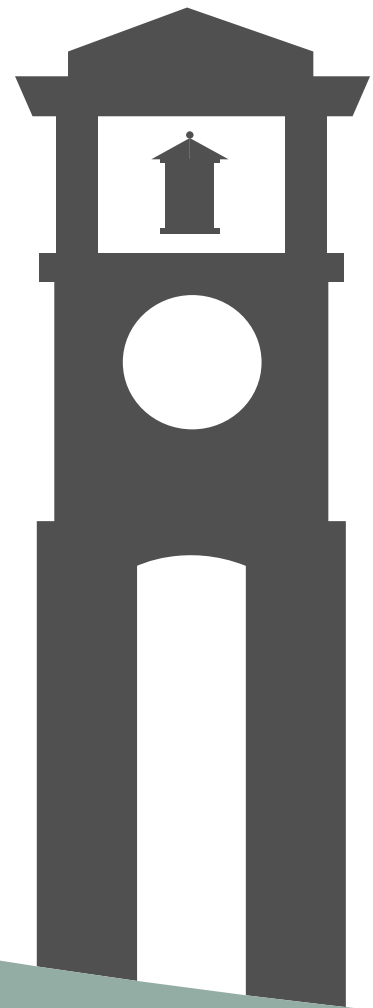
Preparation

- Two meanings:
 - Educational preparation to be able to effective working with MLs
 - Careful planning of learning experiences
- Grade-level PLCs re-making worksheets
- Re-examining own practice to focus on effectiveness
- *“what is best for multilingual learners is what is best for all learners.”*
- Both TESOL & reading* certified
- Needing to understand students and language to be effective
- Referenced need for background knowledge to know where to go
- Project Respect



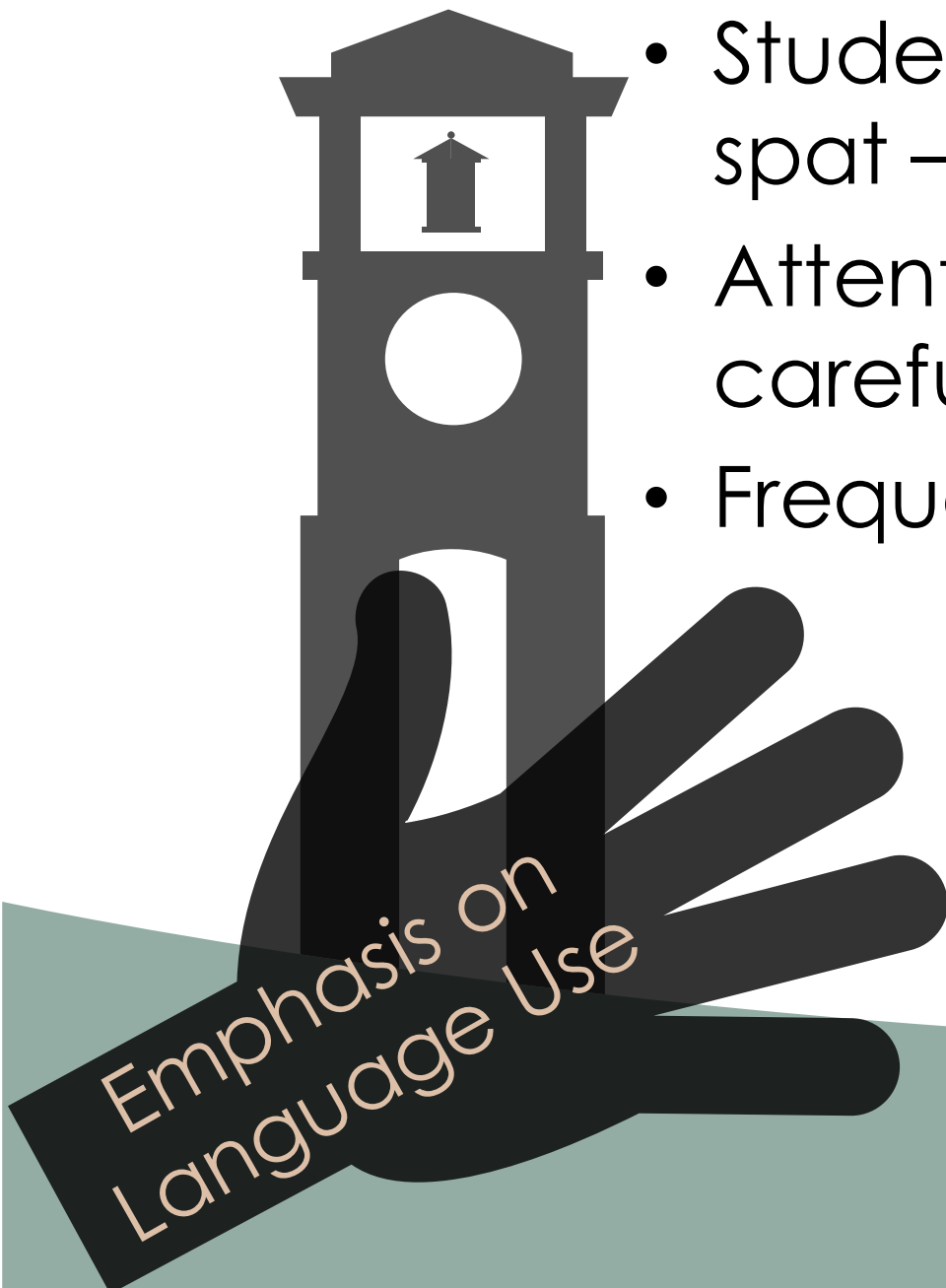
Student-Oriented Supports

- Students at the board to write
- Acting out concepts (hopping for number awareness – Hop with Hap)
- Consistent modeling
- Students talking & working together (in any language)
- Regularly moving in and out of groups, moving for activities (e.g. stations)
- Student choice (e.g. choosing mystery letters, transition videos,)
- Connecting to students' lives (e.g. adjustments around concert practice, student saw a fox at home & shared while working on vowels)
- Clear expectations/directions/instructions, etc.



Emphasis on Language Use

- Regular turn-and-talks & other student-student interactions
- Clear language w/ and w/o translation
- Lots of choral reading/response, repeat-after-me, fill-in-the-blank, etc.
- Student-led, language-heavy activities (activity starting with one word – spat – and gradually changing it, one letter at time)
- Attention to detail (e.g. 'correcting' where appropriate, modeling carefully, accurately pronouncing words, etc.)
- Frequent opportunities for students to share with the class





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Inviting and Supportive Environment

- Consistent circulation with positive reinforcement/encouragement
- Celebrations (cheering, high-fives) when students finish, answer, accomplish things, etc.
- Students working independently on choice activities
- Ensuring everyone is ready (e.g. can see, are comfortable, etc.)
- Lots of saying things together
- Groups & individuals sharing to the whole class
- Asking questions (e.g. “What is this? {a nickel}, What sound does this word make?, etc.)
- Phrasing in 1st person plural (“shift so we all can see”, “the other day, we learned about...”)
- Inviting adults to stay
- Elementary daily message – Learner’s Creed

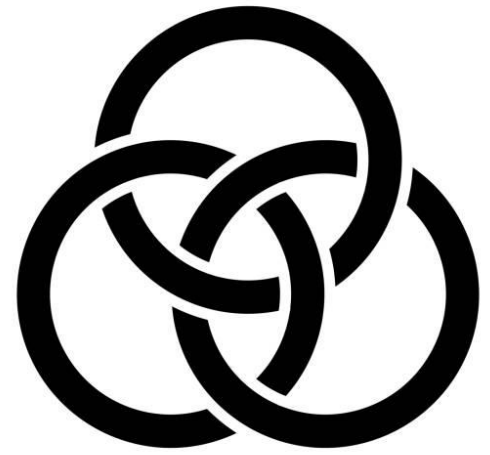
Discussion



- RQ: What strategies and approaches are effective teachers implementing for MLs in a rural, bilingual setting?



So...

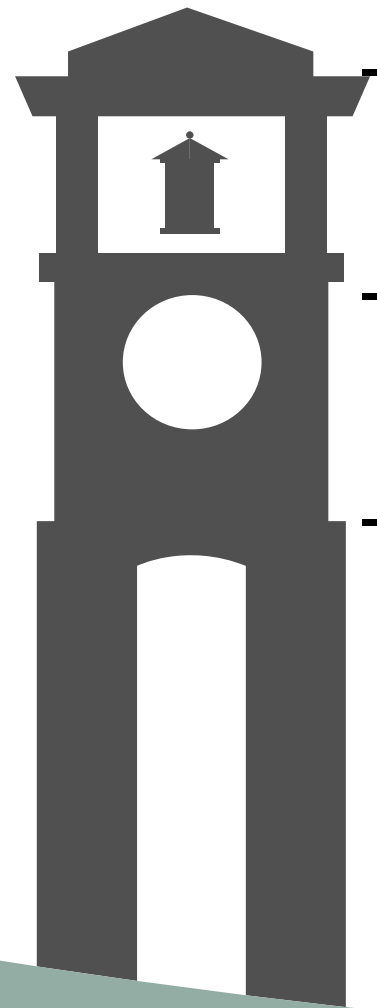


- Strategies are great...
but not enough.
- Teachers & students benefit from

- Effective preparation (NREA, 2016)
- Having an inviting and supportive environment
- Emphasis on language use in the classroom
- Supports tailored to students' needs & interests

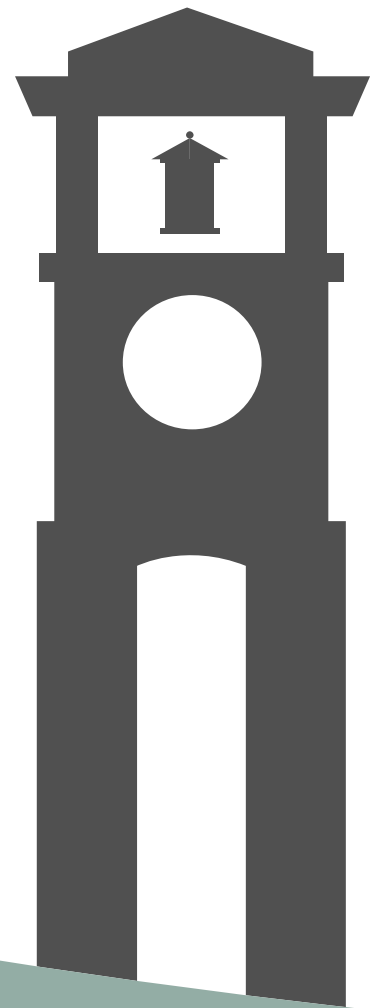
They are Interrelated (example)

- Attention to detail in language (emphasizing language use)
 - Most effective in a supportive, positive community environment
 - Need knowledge of language to have that attention (preparation)
 - Knowledge and understanding of students is needed to tailor feedback



What now?

- Rural, bilingual contexts – “illuminate the educational experiences of Els in rural schools” (Coady, 2020, p. 529)
- Emphasizes the need for specific preparation (e.g. Project Respect, university-based, PD, etc.)
- Emphasis on inviting & supportive environment, developed based on students' needs (which requires deep understanding & strong relationships)
- Emphasis on language use
- How...?



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Thank you!

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