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EDLI 635

Professor Hsu

ELL Case Study

Background:

Chaya is an adorable third grade student who currently lives in Israel. She attends Bnos Hadassah Elementary School in Israel. The school does not have an ELL program, but the teacher is there to address and modify Chaya's individual needs. Prior to attending this school, Chaya went to a Hebrew/Yiddish speaking nursery and kindergarten. Chaya's parents are both fluent in the English language. Chaya's mother comes from England and her father comes from Israel. The reason why her father knows English so well, is because his parents sent him to English tutors and to an English speaking school. Chaya was born in Israel and is the 4th child of seven children in the family. Chaya's family is also part of a very Chasidic community, and they also talk Yiddish at home. Her family travels once a year either to England or America to visit, since her grandparents and extended family lives there. Chaya's parents converse to each other in English, but they speak to their children only in Yiddish. Additionally, all of Chaya's neighbors are Israeli and do not speak or understand English. Since Chaya's father is Israeli, he still converses to his children in Hebrew since it is his mother tongue. When Chaya talks to her siblings or her friends she converses mainly in Hebrew and Yiddish. It is very important to Chaya's parents that she should be able to speak, read and write English correctly and fluently. Therefore her parents sent Chaya to this school since they have the proper tools, programs to help girls like Chaya learn the English language.

Since Chaya's parents both speak English fluently they can provide support at home and do various activities to help her learn. Additionally, Chaya works 2-3 times a week with a private tutor to help her be up to par with the class. Chaya is a bright, motivated learner and has an excellent memory. This is a major advantage to Chaya's learning experience.

The past few years at Bnos Hadassah, Chaya picked up the skills to decode words, read with average fluency, and to write age appropriate words and sentences. When given Chaya a text to read she makes a few mistakes, and can write words and sentences correctly. However, when it comes to reading she cannot fully understand what she is reading. She has major difficulties with comprehension. When asked to retell a story, she can only identify some details of the text, and misses the most important parts of the story because she is not comprehending what she is reading. She can't either identify the main components or idea of the text, setting, and even when asked basic questions. Chaya knows her alphabet and the sounds of all the letters because of her memorization skills, but she still has a difficulty in understanding what she is reading. It does not help her when she reads a text. Chaya's teacher helps her by putting picture to words and using visual aids. Chaya shows very little interest and is not motivated to read, and gets frustrated very quickly because of the lack of her reading comprehension skills.

I noticed in class, while the teacher is reading a book or presenting a new lesson to the class, she follows along quite well. I had Chaya read to me a short story, I was amazed and shocked at how fluently she was able to read to me and her phonetic skills. Chaya was able to read the passage with minimal mistakes, however when she did come across a hard or a long word she would just stare at the word, she wouldn't try to figure it out. By nature, Chaya is a shy student, so I thought that she might be a little embarrassed to ask for help. I taught her how to

use “chunking”. We tried that method and it did work. However, she was not able to retell much about the short story due to lack of her comprehension skills. She wasn’t able to understand the main idea, sequencing of events, and characters from the story. From the help of the pictures in the book she was able to understand a little better what was going on. I taught Chaya to summarize the paragraphs in Yiddish or in simpler English. When it came to difficult part in the story we thought out loud together and organized the events in the story. For the hard words that Chaya didn’t understand we used context clues to figure out the meaning. We also took the hard word (vocabulary) and wrote it on an index card, Chaya wrote it in her native language in Yiddish or Hebrew. Every time she came across a difficult word she added more words to her ring. Chaya really enjoyed this activity, and this raised her self-esteem and confidence, because she got to learn new words. She was very proud of herself.

When I did some math practice with Chaya, I was able to see that she is very confident with herself. At that time the class was learning multiplication, Chaya had no problem with all the basic math examples. This is because she has great computation and memorization skills. Then, when I did with her a word problem, I realized that she was having difficulties with it because of her comprehension skills and vocabulary. She couldn’t understand what the question was asking. So, I helped Chaya, by telling her to read the problem out loud and to figure out what she has to solve. I would have Chaya read it a few times until she understands and figures out what to do.

I also observed how she interacts with the teacher and her peers in a social setting, since she is a little shy she has a better time conversing and understanding her peers. This could be because they speak in a simpler language, or that the topics that they talk about interest her

more. She is more calm and relaxed when she speaks to her peers than her teachers. I also found that Chaya showed better fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension amongst her peers. Since, she finds it easier to communicate with her classmates, the teacher tries to incorporate lots of group work where she can participate. Her peers and classmates are very supportive and welcoming. Her peers include her by recess time when they are playing a game. This is a great time for Chaya to express herself and learn new words. Chaya can speak a good English when she is around her friends. Chaya is conscious of her English accent.

When the teacher holds a discussion group or when it comes to participation in class, Chaya is afraid to raise her hand or to ask a question. She is embarrassed to raise her hand to ask or answer a question, or to share her opinion with the class.

When I was analyzing Chaya's written work, the teacher or reader can usually comprehend and read what Chaya writes. She does make a few mistakes on grammatical errors with the tenses, but since the teacher plays games, reviews, and of her memorization skills she is already getting better at it. By spelling, Chaya struggles with vocabulary words and its definition. She doesn't have a hard time with the spelling because of her memorization skills.

According to the SOLOM matrix ratings, Chaya falls into phase 2 with a score of 15. Chaya's strengths are her pronunciation, grammar and fluency skills. Her weakness lies in her comprehension and vocabulary skills. Since Chaya's vocabulary is not at the highest level, she sometimes changes words to her native language, Hebrew or Yiddish. Chaya does sometimes makes minimal grammar mistakes, but nothing that really makes it difficult to understand what she means to say.

According to the NYS Limited English Proficient/ English Language Learner observation rubrics, and the SOLOM matrix ratings, shows that Chaya scored on the lower side in her reading and writing skills. She has limited comprehension and vocabulary, but great phonics skills. In terms of her listening and speaking skills she is categorized to have low intermediate skills. She can interact socially very well, but she still can use some visual cues and gestures to help her understand. Chaya is also limited when it comes to participation, since she speaks English a little slower than she speaks Hebrew or Yiddish, and her vocabulary is not the greatest.

Recommendations:

From what I observed and interacted with Chaya, I would recommend that her teacher should ask questions about the text or short story that they will read before they actually start reading. When the teacher focuses on the important details of the text, this will help Chaya and the other students in the class, understand the story a lot better. Additionally, it is also very beneficial to have a class discussion about the text that is being read. Another good strategy would be to use graphic organizer or charts, rephrasing, or drawing pictures.

I would also recommend that during group work, (and there should be a lot of that) Chaya should be paired up the stronger students, in the class. The students that have a higher level of comprehension, can express themselves clearly, grammar and vocabulary skills. This way Chaya can learn from them, and ask them any questions that she has when she is unclear with something, since she feels more comfortable and relaxed when she speaks with her peers.

Additionally, Chaya should go to a library and she should be able to select and see a large selection of books that interest her. She shouldn't be shown books that are boring,

because this will not motivate her to read. If Chaya would read more than it would increase her comprehension skills and she will be learning lots of new words. For vocabulary, Chaya's teacher should play with them an exciting game every time she teaches them a new word. She should also incorporate some technology. I feel that this is very important in today's generation technology and games makes learning that much more exciting and fun for all children.

Reflection:

I have learned a lot from working with Chaya, when you're working with a class or as a teacher you have to move on to a different topic, even if one student hasn't understood fully what you have taught. The ELL case study is unique because you can exactly see what the students strengths, weakness are, and what she still needs to work on. With the proper instruction, dedicated teacher, and a lot of time and effort every student and an English Language Learner can succeed. I also learned how to use a rubric to assess where Chaya is holding and standing, what she still needs to work on.

Additionally, I also learned that each student is a world of their own and no two students are alike. Each individual has their own strengths, weakness, and interests. It is also extremely important not to label any students like "she has a problem with comprehension, or social skills .etc. As future educators, we must look at each child as their own unique person and believe in what they can achieve.

