Informational Empowerment: Using Informational Books to Connect the Library Media Center Program with Sheltered Instruction

Jamie Campbell Naidoo

College of Communication and Information Studies,
University of Alabama, USA

Sheltered instruction (SI) is a teaching strategy that allows the school library media specialist to collaborate with the English-as-a-second language (ESL) program to help English language learner (ELL) students integrate second-language acquisition skills with content area instruction. By aligning ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students with Information Power standards, a powerful collaborative effort is formed between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers. These two United States standards for education allow ESL teachers to learn selection criteria and teaching strategies for using informational trade books with ELL students while providing an opportunity for the school library media specialist to learn how better to assist ELL students with acquiring information. Read-alounds, puppetry, book talks, storytelling, author studies, and listening centers are useful approaches for incorporating the various genres of informational books into sheltered instruction.

Cut Into Me

Alone on the swing I sit thinking
wanting to go away to disappear like fog
slow movement back and forth
Afraid
Fear holds me in place for you […]
They want me to learn to survive in your world
But I don’t know how to tell them about you
stealing away my language

Why do you do this?
I am only five a girl a child
and I am afraid
I swing back and forth holding secrets inside
You beat me with your words
You beat me with my own hands because I cannot speak your language though I try I can’t.

(Yazzie-Shaw, 2004, p. 11)
**Historical Context**

"Each day, many millions of Americans are denied their right to speak in their own words... [The largest of these silenced groups are] the millions of American school children who do not speak English, or Standard English" (Santa Ana, 2004, pp. 1-2). According to the United States National Center for Education Statistics (2004), these three million English language learner (ELL) children comprise 7% of the US public school population and along with their families, comprise 18% of the total US population. Similarly, 11% of public schools in the US have an ELL population of 15% or more.

The experiences of these ELL children in US public schools are varied. Many ELL children are mainstreamed into regular school curricula and required to speak English. Those ELL children fortunate enough to have some sort of English-as-a-second language (ESL) instruction are underserved and according to Santa Ana (2004), in danger of having this native-language instruction discontinued as a result of yearly progress mandates by the US *No Child Left Behind Act*. Yet, as Hakuta, Butler, and Witt (Hartman, 2005) maintain,

A child can be a fluent speaker and reader in his or her home language, but unless the English learning at school is a tailored set of material and instructional components that work from the resources in the child’s particular language community, fluency will...take longer. (p. 5).


After I entered school, I experienced culture shock when teachers did not allow the children in my elementary school to communicate in the language they knew best... We were being forced to learn a language and subject content in an unnatural and punitive manner. Those traumatic experiences as a child affected me for quite a long time... School was a scary place for a child who felt rejected because of the language she spoke... [School officials did not realize] that teaching a child first in his native language made it easier for them [sic] to learn the English language, without the emotional scars. (p. 159)

Fortunately, strides have been made in the US to educate ELL children in their native language while at the same time developing their English proficiency and literacy skills. In 1995, the US organization Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, Inc. (TESOL) established a task force to examine current content-area standards in schools and to develop national standards for ESL education of ELL students (Short, 2000). In 1997, TESOL published *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students*, which outlined educational goals for ELL students and provided maximum flexibility in the curriculum and program design of ESL education in the US. TESOL also described the principles of second-language acquisition and the contribution of native-language proficiency to the development of English.

However, although national efforts have been made to standardize ESL education programs in the US, methods and strategies are varied according to the individual needs of the vastly diverse ELL student population. Indeed, these differences can be quite distinct and include diversity in edu-
cational backgrounds, socioeconomic status, age of arrival in the US, family literacy background, native-born or immigrant status, and geographic background (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2000; Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002b). As a result, numerous methods are used in ESL education to meet the wide-ranging needs of ELL students. Methods vary across the country in terms of the strategies implemented and whether they are mainstream or pull-out programs. These methods include self-contained bilingual classrooms with ESL instruction, pull-out ESL, grade-level classrooms, sheltered instruction, content-based instruction, bilingual education, and immersion instruction (Hadaway et al., 2002b; Freeman & Freeman, 1988).

**Research Purpose**

Initially, my interest in examining the goals of sheltered instruction (SI) to discern how informational books can assist in developing English fluency among ELL students in the US was prompted by my experiences as a school library media specialist at an elementary school in the suburbs of Birmingham, Alabama. Over three years, the ELL enrollment at my school drastically changed from fewer than 10 ELL students in the first year to over 120 (almost a third of the student enrollment) by the end of the third year. As a result, the school was transformed from a virtually monolingual learning environment with one part-time ESL teacher to a vibrant, culturally pluralistic community of learners served by two ESL teachers, two ESL aides, and a Spanish-language teacher. During this time, I had the wonderful opportunity of collaborating with the ESL teachers in sheltered instruction (SI) activities and suggesting many instructional materials for use with ELL students including fiction and nonfiction books, big books, bilingual books, audiovisual materials, puppets, commercially made pictures, and various realia. Having worked one on one with the ESL teachers and assisted in their instructional activities, I wished to learn more about SI and how the library media center (LMC) could extend its services to both ESL teachers and ELL students. At the same time, I was interested in the earlier research on collaborative efforts between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers. Specifically, I wished to know if earlier collaborative efforts had been successful and which strategies were most useful in ensuring effective partnerships for both the ESL and LMC programs. Also, I was interested in instructional strategies, selection criteria, and pedagogy concerning the use of informational books with ELL students.

To answer these questions, I conducted a literature review of the various research reports and professional resources relating to ESL education, ELL students, informational books and classroom practice, library media center services for ELL students, sheltered instruction practices, and collaborative alliances between ESL teachers and the school library media specialist. To complete this review, I used a variety of electronic US indexes such as Library Literature; the Education Resources Information Center (ERIC); the Clearinghouse on Reading, English, and Communication; Expanded
Academic Index; OCLC's WorldCat; and the MLA International Bibliography. The literature that I located was a combination of both professional and research resources including books, journal articles, and research reports from US educational institutions. All my resources were US-oriented except one research article from South Africa. Interestingly, I found scant information in the literature related to the collaboration between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers. Both professional and research resources contained considerable information on the use of informational books in classroom instruction and the use of informational books with ELL students. However, only minimal information was available about the use of informational books in SI, none of which discussed the collaborative role of the school library media specialist with ESL teachers. Thus I wished to provide a literature review of the existing research and professional resources along with personal insights about services to ELL students to lay the groundwork for subsequent research on the union of ESL teaching strategies with the services offered by the LMC program.

In this article, I do not address the various types of ESL programs. Rather, I broadly discuss the current literature on the sheltered instruction (SI) approach, the collaborative roles of the school library media specialist and ESL teacher in successful implementation of SI, and the necessary selection criteria for the informational trade books used with ELL children during SI. By reviewing the current literature on SI and aligning the US educational standards for the ESL and library media center programs, I provide a foundation for the collaborative efforts between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers. Similarly, my work serves as a catalyst for future research on the roles of ESL education and the library media center program in meeting the informational needs of ELL students in the US. In the following section, I examine the goals of SI and describe how informational books can assist in the development of English fluency among ELL student. (Researchers use various terms for the method of sheltered instruction including sheltered content instruction, sheltered English instruction, and sheltered language instruction. I use the term sheltered instruction [SI].)

**Defining Sheltered Instruction**

Said to be the "most influential instructional innovation [in the US] since the 1970s," SI was introduced in the early 1980s by Stephen Krashen to integrate second-language acquisition strategies with content instruction (Echevarria & Graves, 2003). The primary goal of SI is teaching academic subject material to ELL students using "comprehensible language and context, enabling information to be understood by the learner. Sheltered instruction functions as a support until the student is ready for mainstream classes" (p. 8). Generally, ELL students in the US, both monolingual and bilingual speakers, are pulled out of their mainstream classrooms and intro-
duced to SI in an ESL classroom. Thus students are able to work among other students with similar language skills and abilities. SI differs from other ESL methods in that it is a levelled, hands-on extension of the mainstream curriculum and not an exclusive pull-out program. ESL teachers who use SI implement scaffolding techniques that acknowledge ELL students’ current English capacity and begin instruction at the students’ current level of understanding. As the ELL students improve their skills, they are incrementally challenged to move to the next level of language acquisition (Echevarría et al., 2000). Demonstrations and modeling are frequently used, along with cooperative activities to teach science, math, and social studies concepts. In addition, a distinguishing feature of SI is the use of supplementary materials to support the academic text. These materials can include informational trade books (Echevarría et al.; Greene, 1998; Hartman, 2002); graphs and charts (Kottler & Kottler, 2002; Echevarría et al.; Echevarría & Graves); manipulatives (Echevarría & Graves; Gopaul-McNicol & Thomas-Presswood, 1998); realia and props (Kottler & Kottler; Echevarría et al.; Echevarría & Graves); computer-based resources (Echevarría et al.); teacher- and commercially made pictures (Kottler & Kottler; Echevarría & Graves); overhead projectors (Kottler & Kottler; Echevarría & Graves); audiobooks (Echevarría & Graves); graphic organizers (Kottler & Kottler); maps and timelines (Echevarría & Graves); and interactive bulletin boards (Kottler & Kottler; Echevarría & Graves). In this article, I specifically focus on the use of informational books as supplementary materials to textbooks because informational books provide a natural link between the ESL classroom and the library media center (LMC) of the school.

**Realizing the Benefits of Informational Books**

Researchers have criticized the use of textbooks with ELL students for a variety of reasons. They assert that textbooks use readability formulas to “dumb down” the texts (Freeman & Person, 1998); include too much information on a given topic (Hadayaway et al., 2002b; Moss, 2003); are dense with abstract, specialized vocabulary (Allen, 1989, 1994; Hadaway et al.; Moss); avoid controversial subject matters (Freeman & Person; Hadaway et al.); become dated quickly and contain inaccurate content (Moss); fail to provide rich descriptions (Freeman & Person; Moss); are often poorly organized and unclear (Allen, 1994; Hadaway et al.; Moss); contain text that is boring and not motivating (Freeman & Person; Hadaway et al.; Moss); and have poor or no illustrations (Freeman & Person). Based on these identified limitations of textbooks, ESL teachers should seek out other textual informational resources, and informational trade books (including nonfiction and informational fiction books) are just the solution. Hadaway et al. maintain, “while textbooks are ‘one size fits all,’ literature comes in different shapes and sizes... [and] adapt[s] to fit all learners, including English language learners” (p. 42). Similarly, Reid (2002) stresses,
The wide variety of high-quality trade books provides a valuable source for teaching both content and language skills. Both fiction and nonfiction can provide the scaffolding on which English learners can build both content knowledge (history, science, geography, etc.) and knowledge of the language used in schools to describe and explore these different subjects. (pp. 1-2)

Further, Hadaway and Mundy (1999) affirm that informational books provide "an excellent literary vehicle for English language learners, reinforcing language through content concepts that students encounter outside the sheltered environment of the ESL classroom" (p. 464). In fact, researchers have affirmed that informational trade books provide a wealth of benefits to ELL students. These include: (a) supplying information about other cultures and the world around them (Hadaway et al., 2002b; Mlandu & Bester, 1997); (b) enhancing vocabulary development (Allen, 1989; Freeman & Person, 1998; Hadaway & Mundy, 1999; Hadaway et al.; Hartman, 2002; Mlandu & Bester; Moss, 2003); (c) aiding in the development of fluency (Hadaway et al.; Hartman; Mlandu & Bester); (d) motivating recreational reading (Hadaway et al.; Moss); (e) providing appealing illustrations that complement and extend the text (Allen; Hadaway & Mundy; Hadaway et al.; Mlandu & Bester); (f) offering current, relevant, and interesting informational content (Freeman & Person; Hadaway & Mundy; Hadaway et al.; Hartman; Moss); (g) creating a meaningful conceptual framework to use both oral and written language skills necessary in learning content (Allen; Freeman & Person; Hadaway et al.; Mlandu & Bester); (h) establishing a pre-reading framework to help ELL students conduct independent research in the school library media center (Hadaway & Mundy); (i) facilitating individualization of instruction (Freeman & Person; Hadaway & Mundy; Hadaway et al.; Moss); (j) promoting exploration, creative thinking, and lifelong learning (Hadaway & Mundy; Hadaway et al.); (k) assisting in the acculturation process (Hadaway et al.; Hartman); (l) inviting small- and large-group discussions of informational content (Hadaway & Mundy; Hadaway et al.); (m) expanding schemata for enhanced meaning construction (Allen; Freeman & Person; Hadaway & Mundy; Hartman; Mlandu & Bester; Moss); and (n) bridging the gap between first- and second-language contexts (Freeman & Person; Hadaway et al.; Hartman).

In her book Make It Real: Strategies for Success with Informational Texts, Hoyt (2002) provides a plethora of teaching methodologies, strategies, and ideas for incorporating the use of informational books in the classroom. Of particular interest is her chapter "Supporting English Language Learners: Building Content Knowledge and Language." Here Hoyt suggests more than 20 strategies for specifically using informational books with ELL students. Similarly, Allen (1994) suggests eight ways for teachers to use informational books with ELL students. These include:

1. Matching books with particular children to meet both their language needs and their interests,
2. Selecting books that support vocabulary development,
3. Exploring how books can help children develop specific aspects of oral and
written language, (4) choosing books that support understanding across the curriculum, (5) helping children revisit books in significant ways, (6) using books to support talk in book discussions and conferences, (7) thinking of ways that books can be a springboard to writing for a variety of purposes, and (8) using children's responses to books as one way of assessing children's developing language and literacy. (pp. 125-126)

Unfortunately, many ESL teachers are overworked and have limited time to select informational books to use in SI. As a result, they overlook the opportunity to reap the innumerable benefits these books offer ELL students. However, ESL teachers can turn to the resident children's literature expert for help: the school library media specialist. The library media center (LMC) is the perfect extension to the ESL program. Collaborative efforts between the two can prove fruitful and rewarding. As indicated by Dame (1993), the school library media specialist and the programs of the LMC should support the ESL program in the school, develop a comprehensive approach to multilingual materials, and collaborate with ESL teachers. Yet Thomas (1978) laments the lack of collaboration between the ESL teacher and the school library media specialist. She states,

Unfortunately, few bilingual teachers fully understand or exploit the potential resources and services libraries could provide to enhance classroom teaching and to stimulate their students' independent learning activities. Under normal circumstances both teachers and librarians too easily become locked into their respective roles. (p. 58)

In the following sections, I discuss how ESL teachers and school library media specialists can collectively ensure that ELL students in the US receive proper instruction in information literacy and have a positive experience when visiting the LMC. Also, I illustrate how the LMC program can collaborate with the ESL program to provide successful implementation of sheltered instruction strategies, particularly those using informational books.

Creating Collaborative Efforts between the ESL and LMC Programs

The promotion of literacy is the most essential element in the design of school library services to a linguistically and culturally diverse student population. Librarians are faced with the challenge of linking students from widely varying backgrounds to information sources and drawing them into patterns of regular library use. (Dame, 1995, para. 1)

Through collaboration with ESL teachers, school library media specialists can take the first step in overcoming this challenge. Wadham (1999) encourages school library media specialists to work with the school parent teacher association (PTA) and ESL program to coordinate a special time for ELL students and their families to tour the LMC facility and browse the shelves. Mitoma and Son (1999) also confirm that open shelves (stacks) do not exist in many non-US libraries and that students need to be shown how the LMC is organized. Numerous studies have discussed the necessity of
creating a welcoming environment in US public libraries and library media centers to make ELL students more comfortable and less afraid of the foreign environment (Dame, 1993, 1995; Champion, 1993; Mitoma & Son; Wadham). The library media specialist will depend on the ESL program and its teachers for assistance in creating this friendly environment. Champion describes various features of an inviting LMC including: (a) a learning environment that centers on the student, provides safety and comfort, values cultural diversity, and affords a variety of opportunities to interact with literature; and (b) a strong literature program that relates to students' personal interests and encourages collaborative meaning-making in peer groups.

Similarly, the school library media specialist needs to work with ESL teachers when determining which introductory library and information skills should be taught to the various levels of ELL students. Essentially, the ESL teacher serves as the liaison between school media specialist and student (Mitoma & Son, 1999). Dame (1993), in her book *Serving Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Students: Strategies for the School Library Media Specialist*, proclaims,

> Children in our schools are entitled to equal access to information. Information is power... The school library must be recognized for its potential as an information powerhouse, with librarians who strive to remove existing barriers to information access and promote information literacy [to all students, including ELL students]. (p. vii)

She also asserts, “Collaboration between [ESL] teachers and librarians in curriculum planning ensures that the instruction on information literacy is built into the curriculum and is designed appropriately for linguistically and culturally diverse students” (p. 18).

**Aligning the Standards**

An effective measure for guaranteeing collaboration between ESL teachers and the school library media specialist is to align the national standards for each program. In the same way that TESOL created *ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students* to outline the educational goals for ELL students and the ESL program in the US, the LMC program also has national standards that provide educational outcomes for student learning in library media centers. In 1988, the American Association of School Librarians (AASL) partnered with the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (AECT) to create *Information Power: Guidelines for School Library Media Programs*. These standards were updated in 1998, renamed *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning*, and included not only guidelines for information access and literacy in written resources, but also information access and literacy via technology. According to *Information Power*, there are nine information literacy standards for student learning divided into the three categories of information literacy, independent learning, and social responsibility. The standards are as follows.
(A) The student who is information literate (1) accesses information efficiently and effectively, (2) evaluates information critically and competently, and (3) uses information accurately and creatively; (B) the student who is an independent learner is information literate and (4) pursues information related to personal interests, (5) appreciates literature and other creative expressions, and (6) strives for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation; and (C) the student who contributes positively to the learning community and to society is information literate and (7) recognizes the importance of information to a democratic society, (8) practices ethical behavior in regard to information and information technology, and (9) participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information. (1998, pp. 8-9)

In the same manner, the ESL Standards are arranged into three categories or goals: Goal 1: to use English to communicate in social settings; Goal 2: to use English to achieve academically in all content areas; and Goal 3: to use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways. There are also nine standards. US students will (1) use English to participate in social interactions; (2) interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment; (3) use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence; (4) use English to interact in the classroom; (5) use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form; (6) use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge; (7) use appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting; (8) use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting; and (9) use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence (Short, 2000).

Looking at both the ESL Standards and Information Power, I note similarities in their goals and standards (see Figure 1). First, goal one and standards 1-3 of the ESL Standards involve interacting with both spoken and written English in personal ways for personal expression, enjoyment, and to increase communicative competence. These standards correlate with the independent learning section (standards 4-6) of the information literacy standards in Information Power. An ELL student can use information and English to pursue personal interests and strive for excellence in knowledge generation in order to participate independently in social interactions. Another similarity in the ESL and LMC standards would be correlating goal 2 and standards 4-6 of the ESL Standards with the information literacy section of the information literacy standards in Information Power. In doing so, we observe that if an ELL student can access, evaluate, and use information effectively, then he or she will be able to obtain, construct, and apply academic knowledge using English. Finally, goal 3 and standards 7-9 of the ESL Standards correlate with the social responsibility section of the information literacy standards in Information Power. For an ELL student to use English in socially acceptable and appropriate ways, he or she should be able to use information to participate effectively in groups, to practice ethical behavior, and to acknowledge the importance of information in a democratic society.
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<tr>
<th>Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning</th>
<th>ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information Literacy</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal 1: To use English to communicate in social settings.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>A. The student who is information literate:</td>
<td>Students will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 1:</strong> Accesses information efficiently and effectively.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 1:</strong> Use English to participate in social interactions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 2:</strong> Evaluates information critically and competently.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 2:</strong> Interact in, through, and with spoken and written English for personal expression and enjoyment.</td>
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<td>• <strong>Standard 3:</strong> Uses information accurately and creatively.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 3:</strong> Use learning strategies to extend their communicative competence.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Independent Learning</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal 2: To use English to achieve academically in all content areas.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. The student who is an independent learner is information literate and:</td>
<td>Students will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 4:</strong> Pursues information related to personal interests.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 4:</strong> Use English to interact in the classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 5:</strong> Appreciates literature and other creative expressions of information.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 5:</strong> Use English to obtain, process, construct, and provide subject matter information in spoken and written form.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 6:</strong> Strives for excellence in information seeking and knowledge generation.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 6:</strong> Use appropriate learning strategies to construct and apply academic knowledge.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Responsibility</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goal 3: To use English in socially and culturally appropriate ways.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. The student who contributes positively to the learning community and to society is information literate and:</td>
<td>Students will:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 7:</strong> Recognizes the importance of information to a democratic society.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 7:</strong> Use appropriate language variety, register, and genre according to audience, purpose, and setting.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 8:</strong> Practices ethical behavior in regard to information and information technology.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 8:</strong> Use nonverbal communication appropriate to audience, purpose, and setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• <strong>Standard 9:</strong> Participates effectively in groups to pursue and generate information.</td>
<td>• <strong>Standard 9:</strong> Use appropriate learning strategies to extend their sociolinguistic and sociocultural competence.</td>
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**Similarities between the standards:**
- ESL Standards 1-3 correlate with Information Literacy Standards 4-6.
- ESL Standards 4-6 correlate with Information Literacy Standards 1-3.
- ESL Standards 7-9 correlate with Information Literacy Standards 7-9

**Figure 1. A Comparison of Information Power's Information Literacy Standards for Student Learning in the US and TESOL's ESL Standards for Pre-K-12 Students in the US.**
By aligning the standards of the ESL and LMC programs, ESL teachers can assist the school library media specialist in meeting the informational needs of ELL students while also providing instructional strategies for teaching information-seeking skills to ELL students. Similarly, the school library media specialist will have the opportunity to work with the ESL teacher more frequently and will be able to provide his or her expertise on successfully integrating informational literature and information literacy in the SI component of the ESL program. Specifically, the school library media specialist can assist in the selection of informational literature (see the section “Selecting Informational Books”) and share various strategies: reading aloud, book talks, storytelling, author studies, listening centers, and puppetry for creatively using literature with ELL students. Below I briefly explain the effectiveness of these strategies.

Using Informational Literature with ELL Students

School library media specialists have been using read-alouds, book talks, storytelling, author studies, listening centers, and puppetry for decades to improve literature comprehension and promote lifelong learning. Along with these strategies, they also know how to create an aesthetically pleasing, print-rich environment and how to captivate students with all genres of literature including informational books. Through collaboration with the school library media specialist, ESL teachers can learn these strategies.

Read-alouds. “Through teacher read-alouds, English language learners receive frequent exposure to comprehensible input and quality language models” (Hadaway et al., 2002b, p. 57). According to Moss (2003), there are five benefits of reading nonfiction (informational books) aloud: (a) nonfiction draws children into the magic of the real world of other times, lands, and lives; (b) nonfiction sensitizes children to the organizational patterns found in non-story text; (c) nonfiction provides excellent links to fictional texts; (d) nonfiction provides powerful connections to curricular content; and (e) nonfiction read-alouds “whet children’s appetites for information” (pp. 57-58). Further, Hoyt (2002) provides a list of teaching opportunities for informational read-alouds. She maintains that informational read-alouds challenge and stretch the listening comprehension of students as they think in terms of information rather than simply entertainment; make connections to science and social studies by building content knowledge; and are exposed to real-life issues that are beyond their current experience. Interestingly, Kletzien and Dreher (2004) cite numerous studies where informational texts supported better comprehension among children than fictionalized storybooks. The authors also note that using informational books allows children to learn the linguistic features and distinctive language of various genres of literature.

Various approaches to read-alouds use informational books. These include cover-to-cover read-alouds in which the book is read in its entirety; participatory read-alouds in which the teacher and the students alternate
reading lines of the book; chapter or excerpt read-alouds in which only portions of the informational book are shared; and caption read-alouds in which only the captions under the illustrations in informational books are read (Hadaway et al., 2002b). In addition, when preparing to read nonfiction books aloud, ESL teachers and school library media specialists are encouraged to consider Pike and Mumper’s (2004) suggestions for effective nonfiction read-alouds. (a) Select nonfiction materials that you are interested in and that will captivate your students’ interest and enthusiasm; (b) use a variety of nonfiction materials in your read-aloud sessions; (c) read with expression and intonation to allow students to understand the book’s message; (d) encourage discussions, questions, and comments as you read in order to spark dialogue; and (e) point out relevant access and visual features as you read, explaining their purposes.

Book talks. “Book talks offer another surefire way to ignite children’s interest in nonfiction. From book talks children learn just enough about a book to determine whether it appeals to them.” (Moss, 2003, p. 65). Long gone are the days of traditional book reports. Today ESL teachers and ELL students can share the exciting essence of an informational text using a variety of book-talking approaches. One approach would be for the student or teacher to dress up as a book character or bring a piece of realia that relates to the story and provide a summary of the book incorporating the character or realia. Another approach for book-talking involves the student or teacher reading select lines or passages from the informational book, but giving only enough information to pique the interests of other students. Students and teachers can also create flyers or brochures advertising their book and detailing important facts. Book-talking provides ELL students with a non-threatening alternative to practice their oral communication and public-speaking skills. Once students are in costume as a character, they forget their shyness, as they are engrossed in sharing the informational text.

Moss (2003) provides book talking guidelines that include: “(1) reading the book before telling students about it, (2) preparing the program in advance and collecting the books that will be presented, (3) considering the students and their interests, and (4) keeping the program brief” (p. 65). Baxter (1999) has written a series of three exceptional resource books on book-talking informational (nonfiction) books. The first in the series is Gotcha!: Nonfiction Booktalks to Get Kids Excited About Reading.

Storytelling. Storytelling, an oral tradition that has been around for centuries, is one of the best techniques to expose ELL children to literacy (Mlandu & Bester, 1997). The storyteller may read from a book, relate an anecdotal or personally special story, or describe a significant event. Often the storyteller uses a puppet as a visual aid and “partner” while he or she presents a story to the audience. Storytelling can be formal or informal and is hosted by the school library media specialist, ESL teacher, or ELL student. Folktales from the ELL students’ native cultures are wonderful springboards for a storytelling program. Also, according to Buchoff (Hadaway et

Author studies. "Another way to heighten student enthusiasm for nonfiction is through in-depth study of a particular nonfiction author" (Moss, 2003, p. 66). Many prominent authors have created informational books on a variety of reading levels. By studying certain authors of informational books, ELL students will learn the distinct style and techniques used by authors to share information (Hadaway et al., 2002b; Moss). In doing so, the ELL students can gain "confidence in their ability to comprehend an author whose style they have come to understand and enjoy" (Hadaway et al., p. 233). Similarly, according to Krashen and Terrell (Hadaway et al.), author studies allow ELL students to learn the similar syntax, familiar context, and predictable style of each author.

When completing an author study, it is recommended that the whole class study the same author rather than having individual students study an author. In addition to studying the content of the authors' books, students should also become familiar with their lives. This adds authority to the authors' works and makes the information contained in the informational books more meaningful to the student. Several good sources of information about authors include Gale Research's (1986) series Something About the Author, Preller's (2001) Big Book of Picture-Book Authors and Illustrators, and Kay Vandergrift's Web site Learning About the Author and Illustrator (www.scils.rutgers.edu/~kvander/authorsite/index.htm). Moss's (2003) book Exploring the Literature of Fact also includes a listing of suggested authors of informational books for study.

Listening centers. "The importance of audiovisual materials for children who are learning English cannot be emphasized enough. The study of any language requires that students hear the sound of the language so that their ears become familiar with it" (Goley, 1985, p. 96). As indicated in the above section on read-alouds, there are many benefits to hearing nonfiction read-alouds. In addition to these, Casbergue and Harris (1996) cite several benefits to listening to audiobooks either individually or in listening centers. These include assisting ELL students with improving both their reading and speech; internalizing the basic structure of narratives; recognizing and hearing the difference between the underlying structure of written language compared with oral language; acquiring English lan-
guage fluency, decoding printed text; and emulating phrasing, pronunciation, accent, emphasis, and tone.

Realistically, at times the ESL teacher does not have the time to engage students in quality read-alouds. Nonetheless, hearing read-alouds is essential to the linguistic and literacy development of ELL students, and ESL teachers can turn to listening centers as a solution to time constraint problems. Generally, listening centers comprise a cassette player with several sets of headphones connected to allow four to six students to listen to an audiobook or recorded version of a book. ESL teachers can purchase these listening centers for the ESL program or borrow them from the LMC. Special audiobooks can also be purchased that specifically aid ELL students with their English language acquisition. These are read at a slower pace and without any distracting music. Examples are Carbo Recorded Books produced by the National Reading Styles Institute (www.nrssi.com) and Smartreaders/Steadyreaders produced by Recorded Book, LLC (www.recordedbooks.com). Recorded Books also offers three additional products: *English for You, Begin in English*, and the *Oxford Picture Dictionary*. If funding is a problem, these audiobooks can be acquired through the LMC. Also, Allen (1989) suggests “once a book has been shared, it can be taped so that children can listen to it as often as they wish” (p. 62).

No matter how audiobooks are acquired, ESL teachers are advised to choose them wisely and carefully. Casbergue and Harris (1996) suggest selection criteria for audiobooks that will entice ELL students. The recording should be performed by a single narrator and be unabridged; free of errors and of high literary quality; and spoken with clarity and with alternating voices for individual characters in the text. But remember: “To offer work of little or no distinction is to waste the opportunity” (Casbergue & Harris, 1996, p. 57).

*Puppetry.* For years, library media specialists have been using puppets to introduce books during book talks and in story times. Using puppets to extend a story during informational book sharing provides for nonthreatening questioning about story elements and vocabulary. Although many ELL children are hesitant to participate in large group discussions with the library media specialist or ESL teacher, my experience indicates that they will often not hesitate to interact with a puppet. Similarly, puppets can be used to explain confusing concepts encountered in informational text and to introduce cultural aspects found in folklore. (I include folklore in my discussion of informational books as it is rich with descriptions and information about the culture represented in the tale.) According to Wadham (1999), folklore represents the “basic cultural touchstones every child should know” (p. 57), and “puppet shows are an excellent way to present the folklore of any culture” (p. 67). Similarly, “bilingual storytimes and puppet shows for children of various ages improve their mastery of their own language as well as ties to their culture through the use of folklore, song, and rhyme” (Goley, 1985, p. 94).
Additional services. Besides assisting ESL teachers with instructional strategies for using informational books with ELL students during SI, the school library media specialist serves ESL teachers as a resource for information access. This is accomplished in numerous ways. First, the school library media specialist can identify and distribute current research articles to ESL teachers about language acquisition and information literacy. Second, the school library media specialist can provide training and professional development opportunities for ESL teachers to learn additional teaching methods for ELL students. Third, the school library media specialist can distribute bibliographies of high-interest, low-reading-level informational materials to use with ELL students, as well as listing supplementary visual materials to use in SI. Fourth, the school library media specialist can coordinate with the public library and other educational institutions to acquire additional books, realia, and other resources to be used in the ESL program during SI. Finally, the school library media specialist can collaborate with ESL teachers to create multicultural programs and festivals celebrating all cultures, particularly those that represent the ELL population of the school. Dame (1995) indicates that the school library media specialist holds a “strategic position as an integrator, coordinator, negotiator, unifier, and equalizer” (para. 6) within the school and surrounding community. Ultimately, the goal of the school library media specialist is to be the number-one information resource for the ESL program and its teachers.

As mentioned above, the school library media specialist can assist the ESL teacher in selecting informational literature to use during SI. In the following section, I discuss the various types of informational books along with the advantages that each type offers ELL students. I also explain how appropriately to select informational books to be used with ELL students during SI.

Identifying the Types of Informational Books
I discuss above the usefulness of informational books in SI and mention that ESL teachers may have limited time and resources to obtain quality informational books for use in SI. An effective LMC has a wide variety of informational books on a range of reading levels. Thus it would seem only natural that the LMC program should play a pivotal role in providing resources for the ESL program. In fact one of the major responsibilities of the school library media specialist is to select appropriate materials for those who will use the LMC’s collection and to find ways to deliver these materials to the intended users. Dame (1993) asserts, “to be truly inclusive, the school library media centers with a population of linguistically and culturally diverse students have an obligation to provide books and materials on all subjects that meet the needs and interests of these students” (p. 53).

Various types of informational books are useful to ELL students. Each type of informational book serves a specific purpose and when well chosen, can be beneficial to ELL students. I briefly discuss below the following
types of informational books: concept books and dictionaries; historical fiction; biographies; multicultural literature and folktales; general science, math, and social studies nonfiction picture books; comic books; and native language books.

*Concept books and picture dictionaries.*

For the child just beginning the move into a new language, one of the first priorities is the acquisition of new labels for old experiences, and for the many new experiences of life in a second culture. Concept books [and picture dictionaries] can provide strong support at this point. (Allen, 1994, p. 118)

Concept books are the most straightforward type of informational books and generally contain limited text accompanying a simple illustration of a basic concept: colors, shapes, opposites, foods, occupations, transportation, animals, textures, and so forth. Similarly, picture dictionaries match vocabulary from one language with a picture accompanied by a label with the corresponding English language word. Reid (2002) emphasizes that picture dictionaries are one of the most effective aids for ELL students to use when learning English and notes several benefits of using them. These include identifying needs and desires, anchoring events and situations, and teaching fluency by creating a mental path between the image and the English name.

*Historical fiction.* Historical fiction provides a fictionalized account of an event or time period in history. Generally, this type of informational book mixes facts with the author’s inventions to form an in-depth account of an historically significant event. When accompanied with social studies nonfiction, historical fiction allows ELL readers to discover places, events, and characters and associate with them on a more intimate level (Reid, 2002).

*Biographies.* Like historical fiction, biographies allow readers to experience a more in-depth account of an historic event or period. But unlike historical fiction, they provide factual accounts of the lives of real people. When reading biographies of US historical figures, ELL students receive lessons about the culture of the country (Haddaway et al., 2002b). Further, Reid (2002) maintains that although biographies are an excellent reinforcement of information about an historical event, they can become problematic for ELL students who expend too much effort in trying to understand the story. She suggests that educators allow ELL students to choose appropriately leveled biographies to enhance their learning.

*Multicultural literature and folktales.* It is imperative that ELL students encounter books that relate to their personal culture (Dame, 1993; Allen, 1994; Reid, 2002). Reid insists that multicultural literature is essential for use with ELL students to teach them acceptable ways of reacting to difference and to infuse language teaching with the ideals of respect for diversity. Further, she relates that multicultural literature provides a context to explore these issues at an impersonal distance. Multicultural literature and folktales help ELL students in their development of a racial, cultural, and individual identity while also enabling them to see themselves as a part of
larger society, empowering them to become autonomous, and supporting their development of social skills (Allen; Dame).

*General science, math, and social studies nonfiction picture books.* Nonfiction picture books about science, math, and social studies are the type of informational books most often used by ESL teachers in SI. As indicated above in the section “Realizing the Benefits of Informational Books,” these types of books extend the textbook information, provide up-to-date information that is easily accessible to ELL students, and reinforce the curriculum of the school.

*Comic books.* Often shunned by teachers and school library media specialists, comic books are an important and overlooked material for language development in ELL students. Comics can provide informational content in an enjoyable and non-threatening manner. Mlandu and Bester (1997) note, “comics bring appeal where all other printed matter [have] failed. Indeed comics motivate children to read more. The texts of comics are actually linguistically appropriate” (p. 202). An example of comic book-style informational books in the US is the *Newspaper Histories Series* edited by Paul Dowswell. This series includes information about historic events and ancient times in a sensationalized comic book form of ancient newspapers.

*Native language books.* Books written in the native language of ELL students are also important to use during SI. When ELL students first begin their English language education, they need the opportunity to encounter informational texts in their native language as well as in English. In doing so, they will feel less threatened by their new learning environment. In addition, bilingual books are important because they blend the native language of ELL students with the new language they are learning. Also, making bilingual books accessible to ELL students allows them to select books that they can take home to share with their parents and other family members.

**Selecting Informational Books**

ESL teachers and school library media specialists need to be cognizant of the various criteria for selecting appropriate informational books to use with ELL students in SI. Researchers recommend that the content of the text in informational books relate to the background experience of the ELL student (Allen, 1994; Hadaway, Vardell, & Young, 2002a; Moss, 2003; Reid, 2002; Wallace, 1986); be predictable, inviting children to join in and read along (Allen, 1989, 1994; Hadaway et al., 2002a; Reid; Tsarykovska, 2005); include language that is simple and direct (Hadaway et al., 2002a; Reid; Tsarykovska); contain accurate information in small chunks that can be accessed by the ELL students (Allen, 1994; Hadaway et al., 2002b; Moss, 2003; Reid; Tsarykovska; Wallace, 1986); be leveled and age-appropriate (Moss; Tsarykovska); expose ELL students to various styles and patterns of writing (Hadaway et al., 2002a, 2002b); match the illustrations (Allen, 1989,
1994; Hadaway et al., 2002a; Moss; Reid; Tsarykovska; Wallace); expand awareness and embody quality; avoid stereotypical generalizations (Moss; Tsarykovska); and maintain layout consistency throughout the book (Allen, 1994; Hadaway et al., 2002a; Moss; Reid; Tsarykovska).

Also, it is imperative for ESL teachers and school library media specialists to critique the illustrations of informational books used with ELL students in SI. "Highly visual books help provide scaffolding as students begin by 'reading the pictures.' This can build confidence and independence, too" (Hadaway et al., 2002a, p. 56). Thus informational books for ELL students need illustrations that support the text by matching what the text is conveying; extend the text to provide a better understanding of content; contain strong and accurate details that are consistent with the text; provide an understandable sequence of events; and relate positive, non-stereotyped images (Allen, 1989; Hadaway et al., 2002a; Reid, 2002; Tsarykovska, 2005; Wallace, 1986).

Numerous US professional books and Web sites provide bibliographies of quality informational trade books that can be used with ELL students during SI. Two such books are Book Bridges for ESL Students by Reid (2002) and Exploring the Literature of Fact by Moss (2003). Further, Kletzien and Dreher's (2004) book Informational Text in K-3 Classrooms: Helping Children Read and Write lists several Web sites that provide exceptional resources for selecting appropriate informational books, including information on the two US awards given to informational books: the Robert F. Sibert Information Book Award and the Orbis Pictus Award for Outstanding Nonfiction for Children. Yet it is important to remember that

any checklist of things to consider in selecting books or other reading materials can only provide a very general guide, for there is no formula for a good book. Still, when one comes across a particular book which seems to go down well with a number of readers, it is worth perhaps considering why. (Wallace, 1986, p. 161)

**Research Implications**

Although great strides have been made in educating ELL students, much improvement is still needed. ESL teachers and school library media specialists can learn about and take advantage of the collaborative opportunities that are possible between their programs. Similarly, the school library media specialist can be assertive and approach ESL teachers with strategies outlining how he or she can assist ESL teachers with various teaching methods, particularly SI. The school library media specialist can also consider aligning the Information Power standards of the LMC program with the ESL Standards of the ESL program to improve the instruction and quality of both educational programs. It is essential for both ESL teachers and school library media specialists to realize that "America's diverse classrooms require a wide range of language, topics, and literary styles that only informational books can provide" (Tsarykovska, 2005, p. 111). Literacy is experienced through the informational extensions afforded by quality

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As a child, [informational] books were my cultural teachers. They helped explain concepts and traditions specific to the United States that I couldn’t ask my parents... I remember reading books and falling under a spell, stepping into another world, becoming another person... The beauty of a book stems from the way in which readers can overtake words. Words have built-in spaces where readers can make themselves cozy. (p. 155)

Certainly ELL students deserve these cozy spaces. Collaborative efforts between the LMC and the ESL programs are a requisite for creating these welcoming environments infused with informational books. Yet the question remains: When will this collaboration begin?

The current literature suggests that informational books are useful in the SI activities of the ESL program, that school library media specialists should acquire materials that assist ELL students, that the LMC should be inviting to ELL students, and that ESL teachers need to select appropriate informational books to use with ELL students. However, only a limited portion of the current literature addresses the importance of collaboration between the ESL and LMC programs. Similarly, the role of the school library media specialist in SI is overlooked in both professional and research resources. Additional field research is needed on the effects of collaboration between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers on the instructional practices and materials used with ELI students. Actual practice and research in aligning the US educational standards of the LMC and ESL programs can provide further information on how the two programs can collaborate effectively. Surveys of actual programs implementing collaborative strategies will reinforce the powerfulness of equal, cooperative efforts between the school library media specialist and ESL teachers. Moreover, subsequent research on the role of the school library media specialist in assisting ESL teachers in SI is crucial, as well as research on the role of ESL teachers in the instructional practices of the library media specialist.

The author bell hooks (Santa Ana, 200) once said,

I know that it is not the English language that hurts me, but what the oppressors do with it, how they shape it to become a territory that limits and defines, how they make it a weapon that can shame, humiliate, colonize. (p. 85)

We school library media specialists and other classroom educators are often the oppressors. What will we do with our English language? Will we collaborate and provide informationally empowered learning environments, or will we continue to construct our territorial boundaries?

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Author Note

Jamie Campbell Naidoo has worked as an elementary school librarian, as a children’s department and program coordinator in a public library, and as a young adult librarian. Currently, he works in the circulation department at Hoover Public Library in Hoover, Alabama while finishing his doctorate in information studies at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa.