Lesson 1.1B: Reflective Journal: Understanding the English Learner

As a first-year teacher assistant, I do not have any English Language Learner students in my classroom. We do have a student from Russia, but he has graduated from our ESL program prior to this year, so I did not get to observe him over the five stages of second language acquisition. The only other students that I interact with throughout the day are two Spanish speaking students in an “out class” that I rotate to with a few of my students. One of the Spanish speaking girls can communicate better than the other, so she helps translate often. Otherwise, they use a translator program on their computer to help them understand what is being said in the classroom during instruction.

Although I do not communicate often with them, I do observe the ways the teacher communicates and the obstacles she and the students face most often. I understand the difficulty with the teacher not being able to speak Spanish and communicate fluently with the students, but I can’t imagine how much harder it is for the students. Even though they have their translators pulled up on their computers, they are also getting every background noise and conversation recorded so it can be very difficult for them to decipher what the teacher is saying over what their classmates are saying. This can make it even more difficult for them to learn.

After reviewing the “words you should know” part of Lesson1, I do notice myself using “survival words” over more difficult words. I definitely have a lot more growth in my knowledge of ELL students and the ability to meet their needs effectively. We do have an ESL teacher at our school, and I plan to meet with her sometime throughout this course to gain a better understanding of how I can grow in this area.