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Teaching English Learners in Mainstream Classrooms

by

Chelsea Lauren Posey

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Abstract

English learners (ELs) are students whose primary language is one other than English, and these students face significant obstacles in American classrooms as they learn both K-12 curricula and English simultaneously. Available scholarship indicates that school districts lack proper resources as a result of negative attitudes toward publicly-funded language programs and legislation relating to minority education in America. This thesis will provide a historical overview of relevant legislation and state initiatives so the reader can understand the current state of affairs pertaining to the education of these students across the nation.

Conversely, many Teacher Education Programs (TEP) inadequately train teachers to work with ELs, resulting in many teachers feeling unprepared and less efficacious at educating ELs than other sub-populations which exist in schools. The study of TEP and teacher attitudes will elucidate prevailing attitudes regarding how ELs are viewed by teachers in classrooms and allow an overview of the negative attitudes that could be ameliorated with more effective, research-based practices embedded within TEP. This study will identify and explain the most commonly implemented strategies for teaching ELs, including the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol, which allows teachers to be more effective at planning and delivering lessons that help ELs learn content and language at the same time.

The strategies studied offer solutions to many of the problems faced by teachers when they encounter ELs in their classrooms. After an explanation of these pedagogic modification techniques, this paper will end with some suggestions regarding possible future research avenues for ELs.

Introduction

English Learners (ELs) are those students whose primary or home language is other than English. These students find themselves in American classrooms facing significant obstacles; not only do they have to learn state-mandated K-12 curricula, they have to learn English simultaneously. For the past 20 years, this group has been the fastest growing subpopulation in the nation's schools. The latest demographic data available indicate that for the 2013-2014 school year, there were 4.5 million ELs attending classes in the U.S. (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a). The most common language spoken by students other than English is Spanish, but it is not uncommon for one district to have students who speak more than 20 languages (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015b).

The number of Hispanic students alone has doubled in size over the past 20 years in large urban districts in America (Contreras, 2002, p. 141). Furthermore, across the nation, almost 20% of students spoke a language other than English in 2003, which was an 8.5% increase since 1979, and between 1990 and 2000, the number of students classified as limited English proficient (LEP) increased by 105% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005; Kindler, 2002). Once these students have been identified as LEP, they are typically enrolled in a language service program, but cost restraints and policy dictates that, in most cases, ELs spend their days in 'mainstream' classrooms with native-speaking peers (Berube, 2000). These students' presence in mainstream classrooms present unique challenges to both the ELs and their teachers.

As long ago as 1998, Gersten commented that the rapidly increasing number of ELs in the U.S. should be matched with a rapid increase in the number of teachers who are prepared to teach these students. Unfortunately, available scholarship contradicts this statement. In the U.S., more than 60% of school districts with high schools report elevated numbers of EL enrollment in

high-school grades, but most of the schools' teachers are not prepared to teach in the "multilingual, multicultural classroom" that has become the "American reality in the 21st century" (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016a; Costa, McPhail, Smith, & Brisk, 2005, p. 116). In most instances, ELs find themselves at a disadvantage because their teachers do not receive sufficient training regarding teaching English as a Second Language (ESL). What is clear from a cursory review of literature regarding the experience of ELs is that colleges of education and school districts can and should do a better job preparing teachers to help ELs learn important content and academic language simultaneously.

Research indicates that some teachers form negative attitudes and share misconceptions regarding ELs when they feel unprepared to teach these students, especially in secondary classrooms (Reeves, 2002; O'Brien, 2007). Currently, the most popular pedagogic framework for working with ELs is called Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP). A pedagogic framework developed by Echevarria, Vogt, & Short (2007), SIOP has the goals of making teachers more effective at both planning and delivering lessons that assist ELs in acquiring important content and academic language simultaneously. Other researchers have proposed instructional paradigms to help ELs (see Chamot, & O'Malley, 1994; Word, & O'Brien, 2016), but what is clear is that while support and teaching methods for ELs have improved in the past few decades, historical events related to U.S. immigration and legislation privilege English at the expense of other languages in the nation's schools (Costa et al., 2005).

Immigration and Legislation Regarding ELs

Despite the fact that the U.S. has always been a nation of immigrants, the treatment immigrants in local communities has not been positive across time or regions. Recent events in national politics show just how negatively some people view immigrants. Recently-elected president Donald Trump used anti-immigrant sentiment very effectively to win votes from working-class, white Americans who feel that current economic policies have not addressed their dwindling income and job prospects. Many of these people blame immigrants for ‘taking American jobs’ and are thus hostile towards people from other countries (Tankersly, 2016). In the context of this environment, immigration laws and court decisions have affected the way immigrants and those who do not speak English fluently are regarded by native English speakers residing in the U.S., and to understand the current policies regarding ELs, one needs a basic understanding of pertinent legislation which has guided policy to date.

The educational policies of today’s schools in regard to ELs trace their origins to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 which states:

No person in the United States shall, on the ground of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any program of activity receiving federal financial assistance (Berube, 2000, p. 16).

According to this law, educational institutions that receive federal funding must provide equal educational opportunities to all students, including ELs. An EL’s Limited English Proficiency status is considered an ‘extension of their national origin’ under this act; therefore, ELs are protected under this U.S. law (Civil Rights Act, 1964).

Even after the Civil Rights Act took effect, it was apparent that schools were not properly

meeting the instructional needs of ELs across the nation. In response to these concerns, the federal legislature passed the Bilingual Education Act of 1968 under Title VII of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This act was passed in hopes of providing federal support for bilingual programs whose goals were that students become bi-literate. Unfortunately, the U.S. is presently a monolingual nation, and widespread support for bilingual programs is not found among a majority of taxpayers who would have to fund such programs. In response to the abject failure of bilingualism as a policy, several groups went to court to ensure a more equitable and effective education for ELs.

In response to such class action lawsuits, on May 25, 1970, the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) issued a memorandum that clarified the school districts' roles in providing equal opportunities for ELs (English Language Learner Knowledge Base, 2004). The memorandum declares:

Where inability to speak and understand the English language excludes (ELL) children from effective participation in the educational program offered by the school...the district must take affirmative steps to rectify the language deficiency in order to open its instructional programs (Pottinger, 1970, p. 1).

Despite the OCR's mandate, EL students still did not receive equal educational access in many public schools, and in response to this recurring issue, a group of Chinese immigrants took the San Francisco school district to federal court in 1974 in the *Lau v. Nichols* decision. Specifically, a group of Chinese parents argued their Limited English Proficient children were not receiving equal educational rights according to Title VI of the Civil Rights Act (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). The San Francisco school district had utilized a 'sink or swim' model of full inclusion, meaning the onus to learn content and language was on the students without

scaffolding or support from teachers. In response, the Supreme Court ruled that “by [solely] providing students with the same facilities, textbooks, teachers, and curriculum [...] students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education” (Lau v. Nichols, 1974). The Supreme Court ruled that the San Francisco school district had effectively eliminated educational support for ELs in mainstream classrooms, and the actions were therefore in violation of the law.

According to Berube (2000), the Supreme Court’s ruling provided the OCR with the ability to regulate how schools could design instruction designed to assist EL students; however, the OCR decided to take a rather reactive approach when observing the violations of *Lau v. Nichols*. For instance, researchers (Reeves, 2002; O’Brien, 2007) found that the OCR investigated complaints of those concerned with “appropriate action” of schools districts instead of approving language programs before implementation. The word “appropriate” has proven to be a problem because of its ambiguity; due to this ambiguity, many school districts show wide variances in the quality of their language programs (p. 26).

In 1981, the U.S. Court of Appeals, in *Casteñada v. Pickard* (1981), formed a set of standards to measure if schools were meeting the requirements of “appropriate action.” The U.S. Court of Appeals stated:

“...if a school’s program, although based on a legitimate educational theory and implemented through the use of adequate techniques, failed to produce results indicating success in overcoming the language barriers confronting ELL students, then the program may, at that point, no longer constitute ‘appropriate action’ as far as that school was concerned” (*Casteñada v. Pickard*, 1981).

Under *Casteñada v. Pickard*, schools were required to monitor the student success rates of their

programs as a measure of their effectiveness. Furthermore, any educational programming offered to ELs had to be ‘research-based’ and had to incorporate ‘best practices’ in the classroom.

Not every court case, however, has aided EL education in regards to creating guidelines for language programs. For example, in 1998, voters in California passed Proposition 227 with a majority of 61% (California Legislative Analyst’s Office, 1998). Proposition 227 stated:

Whereas, the English language is the national public language of the United States; and young immigrant children can easily acquire full fluency in a new language if they are heavily exposed to that language...It is resolved that: all children in California public schools shall be taught English as rapidly and effectively as possible (Proposition 227, Article I, 1998).

California voters had essentially created a “sheltered immersion” program lasting no longer than a single year and banned EL language programs in their state (Mora, 2005). Unfortunately for ELs in California, the sponsors of this bill were ignorant to the fact that academic language (i.e., the language of the content areas) takes much longer than one year to acquire (Cummins, 2000).

Furthermore, Arizona voters passed Proposition 203 in 2001 which required that EL students learn English in English-only classrooms without any other support in their native language (Arizona Secretary of State, 2000). Similar to California’s Proposition 227, Proposition 203 ended bilingual EL language programs in Arizona and stated that EL students in grades two through eleven should be assessed annually in English with a norm-referenced test (Arizona Secretary of State, 2000). The seemingly successful score reports from these assessments excluded the scores of ELs who had been in school for four years or less (Wright & Pu, 2005). In other words, the test scores were skewed by deliberately tossing out scores of EL students who were expected to fail, making the average test results appear higher. The school districts had

attempted to prove that their method of teaching ELs was effective and efficient when not all students benefited from this type of program structure.

Conversely, California initiated the Save Our State movement in 1994 which led to the passing of Proposition 187 that argued “illegal aliens were unfairly benefiting from the state resources and were crowding children out of public schools” (Contreras, 2002, p.2). This piece of legislation was quickly deemed unconstitutional by federal courts since it was designed to segregate Hispanic children from schools by denying public education to anyone who was “reasonably suspected” to be an illegal alien in the U.S. The mandate required teachers to single out any student in their classrooms who they believed were in the U.S. without immigration documentation. Proposition 187 was not a “race-neutral law,” and it opposed the Supreme Court rulings in *Plyler v. Doe* and *Brown v. Board*.

In the case of *Plyler v. Doe*, the Supreme court ruled in 1975 that no one could be denied free public education because they could not provide immigrant documentation (*Plyler v Doe*, 1982). California Proposition 187 also directly conflicted *Brown v. Board*, the Supreme Court case mandating that separate educational facilities were not equal and students could not be separated based on race; the federal courts ultimately declared the proposition unconstitutional (*Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka*, 1954). Even though Proposition 187 was never put into action in public schools, the mandate’s passing indicates that Americans harbored negative feelings toward those who were not native English speakers in the mid-1990s.

Since the middle of the 1900s, Florida has been home to a large population of ELs in its schools. As recently as 2013, Florida was ranked ninth in regards to highest percentage of ELs (Ruiz Soto, Hooker, & Batalova, 2015). In response to a lawsuit brought to state courts on behalf of ELs by the League of United Latin American Citizens, the Florida Consent Decree was

enacted. This decree guarantees:

“...[each student has] equal access to appropriate programming that shall include both access to intensive English language instruction and instruction in basic subject matter areas of math, science, social studies, computer literacy which is (a) understandable to the LEP student given his or her level of English language proficiency, and (b) equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence and quality to that provided to English proficient students” (Florida Consent Decree, 1990, p. 6).

Under this mandate, all secondary (grades 6-12) teachers must take 60 hours of training or three college credits of an English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) education course, and teachers must take the training within two years of the hire date even if they transfer from another state (Florida Consent Decree, 1990). Requirements for elementary and secondary English teachers were more rigorous. Specifically, these two groups had to participate in 300 clock hours of training regarding ESL instruction (Florida Department of Education, nd).

Even though *Plyler v. Doe* and *Brown v. Board* are two major court cases that support the needs of ELs, more current legislation still hinders progress. When President Bush’s No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) passed in 2001, ELs were allowed a one-year exemption from taking end of year, state-mandated exams, if they were new to the U.S. ELs were also given the option to take the exams in their native language and were allowed some accommodations such as extra time, the use of dictionaries, and simplified instructions (Robertson, nd). The most glaring flaw in NCLB was its requirement that ELs learn English at a pace that is neither practical nor based on what research tells us about second language acquisition. Specifically, researchers

dichotomize language into Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). BICS is the highly-contextual language of communicating for everyday purposes and can be acquired in one to three years (Cummins, 2000). CALP is much more difficult to obtain, and while acquisition times vary due to a variety of reasons, most researchers agree that it takes five to seven years to acquire, at the very minimum (Collier, 1995).

The legislation mentioned here as well as consent decrees and English-only propositions paint a picture of a society which struggles with linguistic diversity in classrooms. To further understand the experience of ELs as they navigate K-12 educational settings, we must understand the experiences of teachers who encounter these students in their classrooms. Researchers have made considerable efforts in recording teachers' experiences when trying to teach ELs, and we turn now to pertinent studies which elucidate teacher attitudes towards ELs.

Teacher Attitudes

Teachers have found themselves in the strenuous position of having to navigate the mandates and compliance issues regarding ELs as they have changed consistently for years. As a result, some teachers have expressed negative attitudes towards the inclusion of ELs in their content-area classrooms. Besides legislative mandates, other sources of the frustrations that teachers experience come from a lack of training and preparation in TE programs. O'Neal, Ringler, and Rodriguez (2008) conducted a study to determine how teachers felt about their preparation to teach EL students. The authors surveyed 24 teachers from a rural elementary school in North Carolina, and only 25% of the teachers in the survey reported that they felt prepared to teach EL students. Furthermore, only 14% of the respondents reported that they had taken teacher preparation courses regarding language acquisition, and 33% reported that they had taken a teacher preparation course related to teaching students of diverse backgrounds while 100% of respondents reported that they felt responsible for teaching EL students in their classrooms. Almost 10 years after this study was completed, some teachers still believe the responsibility of teaching EL students unfairly increases their workloads, and many TE programs do not offer courses explicitly related to ESL instruction. The negative perceptions created from this lack of training can result in a detrimental impact on the experiences of both ELs and teachers in classrooms across the U.S.

These negative attitudes are more likely to occur in teachers who neither have training nor have experienced acquiring a second language. According to Zehler (2003) teachers typically design their classrooms and teaching styles around their own experiences in school, and the typical native-speaking teacher may not be able to relate to the experience of ELs if they were not exposed to nonnative speakers in school or have never learned a second language

themselves. Most monolingual, native-speaking teachers do not consider the difficulties inherent in second language learning (BICS vs. CALP, for instance), because they have never experienced the phenomenon. As a result of their personal experiences and ease in mastering classroom conventions, teachers often lack the ability to relate to the difficulties ELs encounter in mainstream classrooms, and their inability to relate to their students can lead teachers to underestimate their responsibilities when helping students overcome obstacles related to second language acquisition.

While not all teachers experience negative reactions to ELs, some researchers have found clear examples of negative attitudes and perceptions regarding ELs. O'Brien (2007) surveyed 123 secondary social studies teachers in the ninth-largest district in the nation. Comments from the study participants indicate that many teachers felt frustrated and underprepared to teach ELs at the time of the study. One participant commented that ELs should fail if they could not pass the course without additional help, even if classroom instruction occurred solely in English. These remarks make it apparent that the teacher either did not encounter nonnative speakers in his or her school or was never challenged with a language barrier when trying to learn new content. Other participants in the O'Brien (2007) study agreed that modification of assignments was not necessary when ELs were in their classroom, and one teacher commented that EL students can "sink or swim" in mainstream classes (p. 73).

Furthermore, other participants commented that they needed to lower expectations for ELs because they did not want the ELs to experience anxiety and stress. This phenomenon, known as "benevolent conspiracy" was coined by Verplaetse (1998) in her research of the relationship between teachers and ELs. Benevolent conspiracy negatively affected EL students' performances since the teachers were not holding them to the same high standards as the other

students in the class. This mindset may be improved if teachers are properly trained to understand the issues that ELs face when they are mainstreamed directly into an English-only class, and Lucas and Villegas (2013) argue that this training should begin as early as TE programs as teachers often require years to develop the skills and knowledge required to successfully educate an EL.

The 123 teachers surveyed in the previously mentioned O'Brien (2007) study are comparable to the Reeves (2002) study of teacher perceptions related to mainstreaming ELs. In the study, 306 high-school content area teachers in a southeastern school district were invited to participate in a quantitative study related to their perceptions about EL mainstreaming, and 279 surveys were recorded. In the qualitative survey, 4 subject-area teacher responses were recorded, and the results showed that all 4 teachers had modified some coursework for their EL students including, but not limited to, extended time on assignments, use of dictionaries on tests, and lower-quality work. One teacher from the quantitative study who had experience teaching EL students commented that "if you [ELs] come to America, learn our language" (71). This teacher, for example, clearly harbored a negative attitude toward the inclusion of ELs in her mainstream classroom, and she resented the increased workload as a result of the EL's inclusion.

In the qualitative study, the teachers all agreed that EL inclusion increased their workload and made their lesson planning more difficult. Teachers who complained of the extra work required to help ELs succeed and the communication barriers evident in instructional time cite difficulties in modifying instruction as a main issue for instructing this group of students. The survey results from O'Brien (2007) and Reeves (2002) suggest that teachers can harbor negative attitudes not only toward EL students, but toward the extra skills, training, and effort it takes to help ELs succeed.

If ELs are required to become fluent in English before enrolling in mainstream classes as these teachers wanted, they would need one to three years just to learn BICS and seven to nine years to acquire CALP at the minimum. Collier (1995) found that for students with little-to-no prior, formal schooling and no support in native language development, acquiring CALP can take from seven to nine years. Students who start their schooling in Kindergarten have some time to catch up with native-speaking peers, but for late-arrival immigrants (those who are fourteen and older when they start school in English), they do not have the luxury of time to catch up with their peers. Coupled with graduation requirements (i.e., passing enough classes to graduate) and the increasing complexity of language in high school classrooms, late-arrival immigrants face obstacles with much less time to overcome them and achieve at an acceptable rate (Allard, 2016). Boyson & Short (2003) pointed out that late-arriving ELs with limited formal schooling and low reading proficiency are most at risk of educational failure. These students often have weak literacy skills in their native language, lack English language skills and knowledge in specific subject areas, and often need additional time to become accustomed to school routines and expectations in the United States. They are entering the nation's schools with very weak academic skills at the same time that schools are emphasizing rigorous, standards-based curricula and high-stakes assessments for all students. One manifestation of these obstacles is the low high-school graduation rate among ELs. According to the latest data available, the average Limited English Proficient high-school graduation rate averages at 62.6% (National Center for Education Statistics, 2016b).

Researchers (Vygotsky, 1978; Gass, 1997) have found that in order to acquire a second language, one needs to experience frequent interactions with others who are fluent in the language being learned, and students who interact with others in a sociocultural manner also

begin to form the basis for individual learning. These researchers have highlighted the need for ELs to experience meaningful interaction with other native-speaking students who have already mastered English in order to quickly learn the language; therefore, ELs would benefit from being involved in mainstream classes long before they become fluent in English. Keeping nonnative speakers in a class with other nonnative speaking students would slow down the process of language acquisition instead of speeding it up, and again, this research should be presented in TE programs in order to educate teachers about the process of language acquisition and possibly prevent negative feelings toward ELs.

Some teachers still believe, however, that keeping ELs in ‘pull out’ classrooms is more advantageous for the student rather than placing them in mainstream classrooms, even though research indicates otherwise. Teachers in the O’Brien (2007) study reported that EL students seemed to be faking their inability to understand English, and this assumption led them to believe EL students should be kept in self-contained classrooms. These erroneous beliefs indicate that many teachers do not understand the difference between BICS and CALP and assume that because students can function in social environments, they should be able to do work on par with their native-speaking classmates. While the research does not suggest that placing ELs in an English-only class without assistance is the answer to the problem, it discredits the idea that ELs should be barred from entering mainstream classrooms until their literacy levels are comparable to their native-speaking classmates. Inservice and preservice teachers need to understand that by keeping EL students out of mainstream classrooms and not allowing ELs to interact with other English-speaking students or students who speak their native language, they are doing these students a disservice and harming their academic progress.

The research from Vygotsky (1978) involving the ‘zone of proximal development’ (ZPD) can be applied to EL education so that fluent students can help scaffold them, or assist them, to higher levels of learning, but some teachers tend to think students are gaining an unfair advantage when using bilingual peers as translators (Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez, 2008). Teachers fear that ‘translators’ may give ELs answers to questions; thus, their ELs will not learn the actual content of the lesson because they cannot understand the students’ language. These teachers are concerned that EL students learn to use their Limited English Proficient status as a crutch instead of learning the material on their own. Collaborative learning has become ubiquitous in today’s classrooms because it has increased the amount that students learn and engage with the material, and EL students possibly reap more benefits from group activities since they are interacting and practicing language skills along with the content of the lesson. Kareva and Echevarria (2013) suggest that frequent and direct interaction with others is crucial while EL students are acquiring a new language, so teachers are hindering EL’s academic success by not allowing them to talk with other students who speak the same language. Grouping EL students with other fluent speakers, or even pairing them with a more-proficient EL, provides opportunities for the Limited English Proficient student to practice “conversational and academic language” and “deepen content knowledge” while strengthening their language skills (Kareva & Echevarria, 2013, p. 242). Teachers should be aware of the positive effects of collaborative learning regarding their EL students and of the opportunities it provides for simultaneous learning of the language and content in mainstream classrooms.

While some previously mentioned teachers believe that EL students use their limited-proficient status as an excuse for performing poorly in academics, other teachers experience different frustrations with ELs in their classes. Some teachers are negatively impacting their EL

students because they have formed preconceived misperceptions about the quality of work their students can produce. At the National Council of Teachers of English National Conference, Layzer (2000) presented the findings of her study in which she interviewed 33 secondary content area teachers who had ELs in their classes, and she found that all of teachers perceived that EL students would produce lower-quality work than their native-speaking classmates, even though they were “well-meaning, caring teachers” (6). The teachers in the study had lowered the expectations for their ELs, which produced lowered results, a phenomenon known as the Pygmalion Effect (Rosenthal, 1974). The teachers in this study expected their EL students to produce lower-quality work than their peers, and as predicted by research, the ELs in their classes demonstrated poor achievement levels. When the students perceived that the teacher expected less of them, they put less effort into their work instead of trying to meet higher expectations like the other students. This study should serve as a warning to teachers to expect the same quality of work from their EL students as any other student if they want to see them succeed. In her work with teachers of ELs, Debra Short (1998) argues that teachers should have higher expectations for ELs because they have ‘double the work’ to complete. Specifically, ELs have to learn the same content contained in the curriculum while at the same time learning English so they can access the curriculum and gain numeracy and literacy in a second language.

Other studies have shown that some teachers subconsciously think negatively about their EL students. Teachers in the Verplaetse (1998) study explained that they often avoided asking their EL students questions, a strategy they believed would protect their students from the embarrassment of incorrect answers. The teachers in the study reported that they often finished ELs’ answers for them or avoided asking them difficult questions, but the teachers in these scenarios were still lowering the expectations of the students. In an effort to spare EL students

from shame, the teachers had effectively given the students an easy way out that did not challenge them to practice answering questions in English and practicing the language.

If the research suggests that ELs will learn English at an accelerated pace if they frequently interact with the other speakers of the second language, ELs should be producing as much of their own output as possible in a classroom setting by talking to others or answering the teacher's questions. As in any second language acquisition, language output is critical to becoming fluent; therefore, EL students should have the same opportunities to interact as their native-speaking peers. While the teachers in the Verplaetse (1998) study did not knowingly harbor negative feelings toward their EL students, they were still slowing their academic success by not questioning them about the academic content. According to Reeves (2002), better preparation and training regarding EL instruction could eliminate many of the negative perceptions and actions that adversely impact the educational experiences of ELs.

Why teacher attitudes matter

Teacher attitudes can have a significant impact on the academic performances of EL students if these attitudes are negative and cause teachers to unintentionally change their behavior towards ELs. Teachers who do not understand the obstacles in the language acquisition process can lead teachers to assume that some ELs have learning disabilities.

Cheatham, Jimenez-Silva, Wodrich, and Kasai (2013) found that an EL's options for higher education can be limited by one teacher who wrongly refers a Limited English Proficient student to special education services when they are not properly trained to identify the processes of language acquisition. As evidence of these misdiagnoses in the classroom, in 2011, ELs who were receiving special education services numbered more than 500,000, according to the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition and Language Instruction Programs,

but some of these students would not find themselves in these programs if teachers were more efficacious at determining whether academic struggles are due to a cognitive issue or whether it is simply a symptom of a student struggling with second language acquisition (Cheatham et al., 2013). When teachers who lack adequate knowledge about the language acquisition process refer EL students to the wrong educational services, the students do not receive the proper language supports to perform well academically. Furthermore, providing ELs with special education services, when unnecessary, diverts these resources away from students who truly struggle with actual exceptionalities.

Adelman (1999) argues that the biggest predictor of a student's college success is the high school instruction he or she receives. The research shows that ELs are overrepresented in vocational track programs instead of academic programs, and as a result, many decide postsecondary education is not beneficial to them (Harklau, 1999). Singham (2003) studied high school curricula across the U.S. and found that oftentimes, minorities and ELs are not included in upper-level, honors, or AP mathematics courses. As a result, they lack skills (algebra, statistics) necessary to be prepared for university coursework. Instead of pushing EL students to remain in academically-focused high school programs, schools allow ELs to enroll in vocational programs where the students often feel more comfortable knowing the classes require less CALP and more contextualized, hands-on learning. Many EL students could go on to universities and receive scholarships toward their degrees, but they choose to conclude their academic education at the high-school level after mastery in their vocational program. These decisions lead to an overrepresentation of ELs in vocational schools and can effectively close off many career options for these students, thus reproducing societal inequalities.

Teachers are responsible for providing high-quality instruction and supervision for their students; therefore, they should also be responsible for providing the same quality of instruction to ELs. Cheatham et al. (2013) argues that teachers can be more prepared to coach EL students to academic success if they have the necessary training, and proper training and knowledge about EL students can help teachers avoid misdiagnosing language acquisition for a learning disability and can help many EL students exceed at the higher education level instead of creating negative predispositions toward the ability levels of ELs in the classroom.

Many researchers have studied TE programs across the country to see how they are training preservice teachers regarding ESL instruction, and they have found troubling results. Specifically, researchers have found that teacher preparation programs have deficits when preparing secondary teachers to work with ELs. In 1999, a majority of teachers surveyed indicated that they did not feel prepared to teach ELs content and language simultaneously (National Center for Educational Statistics, 1999; O'Neal, Ringler, & Rodriguez, 2008; Sharma, 2011). Teachers typically have not taken a course focused on issues related to ELs (Menken & Antunez, 2001). In addition, the majority of preservice teachers do not have the experiential knowledge that comes from being proficient in a second language (Zehler et al., 2003). According to Villegas and Lucas (2013), teachers require many years of practice to develop strategies related to teaching EL students well. While excellent ESL teachers never stop adding to their knowledge of new teaching strategies, this process of developing knowledge of ESL instruction begins in TE programs and continues throughout the first years of teaching.

To address the need for content area teachers to be efficacious at teaching ELs, TE programs have taken a variety of approaches. Some programs have created innovative components that foster collaboration between content area teachers, ESL teachers, and teacher

candidates (Evans, Arnot-Hopffer, & Jurich, 2005), while others have identified specific professional development efforts which have been successful (Gort, Glenn, & Settlage, 2007). However, across the U.S. TE programs have been slow to adapt to meet the needs of the growing EL population.

Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez (2008) posit that the literature dealing with linguistic modification for teachers focuses on linguistic approaches and terminology that can be challenging for teachers without background knowledge in linguistics. Furthermore, the linguistic research suggests that teachers need a large skillset and knowledge-base of ESL instruction in order to successfully educate EL students, a requirement that can prove to be difficult and time-consuming considering the many demands already placed on undergraduate preservice teachers in content-area courses, teaching methods courses, general education requirements, school observations, and the student teaching internship.

The research suggests that proper training can help ameliorate some of the negative attitudes as teachers both understand the language acquisition process and learn how to effectively modify instruction. However, studies have consistently shown that most teachers report receiving limited training in this area. It is important to understand how TE programs can increase teacher effectiveness and what they are doing now to train preservice teachers so that we can understand how so many teachers feel unprepared when EL students enrollment has been on the rise across many schools in the U.S.

Teacher Education and Preparation

After a review of literature surrounding legislation regarding minority rights and teacher attitudes toward ELs, researchers Costa et al. (2005) and Cheatham et al. (2013) concluded that providing necessary and adequate training regarding ESL instruction in TE programs could work to reverse some of the negative experiences that ELs currently are facing in public schools. In order to understand how TE programs can improve, a clear baseline of how these programs are currently training preservice teachers is necessary. Costa et al. (2005) made significant efforts in their research to create this baseline and study a TE program that began incorporating ESL training to better prepare their pre-service teachers with the mindset that other programs could mimic the program in the future.

During the research, the faculty of a teacher education program provided students will training regarding EL student needs in mainstream classrooms. Costa et al. (2005) recognized that teachers often create classroom environments that are similar to their own high-school classes, and the researchers wanted to challenge the presumptions of teachers regarding teaching ELs. After the program was completed, the researchers found that providing background information about EL student's cultural experiences, observing political unrest surrounding EL education, and examining classrooms climates and content that support EL student learning resulted in the participants feeling more prepared and less apprehensive toward EL students in mainstream classes (Costa et al., 2005).

While it is important that teachers receive training to teach EL students and create positive classroom environments, the majority of working teachers report that they are not prepared and have received inadequate training regarding EL instruction (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2003). The U.S Department of Education's Office of English Language

Acquisition (OELA) reported that from 1992 to 2002, the percentage of EL students who receive only mainstream instruction and no language support services increased from 3.5% to 11.7 % of the EL population in grades K-12, and with the added challenges of linguistically diverse classrooms, teachers desperately require training to effectively teach these students (Office of English Language Education, 2003).

If the number of EL students consistently increases, teachers should receive proper training to meet the needs of these diverse students in their classrooms. According to Lucas et al. (2008), however, TE programs report that overloaded courses and ever-changing demands for TE curriculum from state departments of education render them incapable of adding extra courses related to ESL instruction. Many of these programs require heavy course-loads already, and instead of decreasing the credits required of TE students, offering an extra ESL course would only produce a more-dense list of requirements for teacher certification (Lucas et al., 2008). While extra courses and training may be initially onerous on the departments and students, producing teachers who are prepared to differentiate their instruction to meet the needs and support the success of diverse learners, such as ELs, is imperative.

Furthermore, of the 123 teachers surveyed in the O'Brien (2007) study, 52 reported receiving no support from administration when they asked for help, and 40 teachers replied that they rarely received support from ESL staff at their schools. With the lack of resources available for teachers with EL students and a high number of ELs in public schools, TE programs should be making considerable efforts to include effective ESL training into their curriculum. Some states offer ESL endorsements for content-area teachers who have EL students in their classes, in hopes that these teachers will be more capable of supporting the students within their classrooms, and in most states, teachers can typically acquire the endorsement by taking a sequence of

classes from accredited colleges and universities. In other states, including Alabama, content area teachers can teach for three years and then take the ESL Praxis. If these teachers earn a passing score, they are considered 'highly qualified' to teach ELs.

These ESL endorsements were offered in 42 states and the District of Columbia beginning in 2005 (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition, 2005). Twenty-two of these states currently require that teachers who are placed in bilingual classrooms have the appropriate language certificate, but the requirements that teachers of bilingual classes must meet do not extend to teachers who teach EL students mainstreamed into their content-area classes. Consequently, this language certificate becomes an issue as teachers with mainstreamed ELs in English-only classrooms may not be fully prepared to meet the student's specific learning needs without receiving any relevant training. Teacher training so far has been problematic overall regarding ELs in content-area classes, and teacher preparation for ESL instruction varies as much as TE programs across the nation. In the next section, we will examine the TE programs of the five states with the highest number of ELs in the U.S. to determine how states are preparing teachers for the rapid growth of this group of students.

Variety of Teacher Education Programs

While the number of EL students in schools on the rise, the distribution is not equal across all states. Sites where immigrants are most likely to reside include the five states with the highest numbers of EL students: California, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois. In an attempt to display the variety of TE programs across the U.S. and the focus, or lack thereof, on ESL instruction, I will briefly describe the nature of training in five states with high numbers of ELs and a history of enacting important legislation for these students.

California:

In the 2012-2013 school year, California had the most EL students (1,521,772), 25% of its total student population, enrolled in public schools than any other U.S. state (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015a). As required by the state of California, teachers who have at least one EL student in their class can either take 18 college quarters, including courses in “Language Development and Usage” and “Applied Methods in Teaching Bilingual & English Language Development,” or they must complete a 4.5-hour staff development program approved by the California Commission on Teaching Credentials (California Commission on Teaching Credentials, 2007).

Texas:

Texas ranked second in the U.S. regarding its EL student population (773,732) in the 2012-2013 school year (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015). In Texas, teachers may earn certification in grades 8-12 if they complete an accredited TE program in the state of Texas (State Board for Educator Certification, 2005). Universities in the state currently require no ESL coursework or training to be certified through their programs unless certification is for the specific purpose of instructing bilingual classes.

Florida:

In the 2012-2013 school year, Florida held the third highest EL student population (277,802) in its public schools (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015a). Teachers in the state of Florida must be trained to teach ELs, a requirement responding to the Florida Consent Decree enacted in 1990 that declares:

“[each student has] equal access to appropriate programming shall include both access to intensive English language instruction and instruction in basic subject matter areas of math, science, social studies, computer literacy which is (1)

understandable to the LEP student given his or her level of English language proficiency, and (2) equal and comparable in amount, scope, sequence and quality to that provided to English proficient students. Recommendations for such programming shall be documented in the form of a LEP student plan, which shall be in conformity with this agreement.” (Florida Consent Decree, 1990, p. 11).

Since the changes to training requirements and curriculum resulted from a lawsuit, school districts may not place a high priority on improving the experience of ELs (O’Brien, 2007). The training required of teachers in Florida consists of 60 hours of inservice training or three college credit hours regarding ESL instruction. In practice, the 60 hours of training simply require teachers to watch videos of best practices and sign a piece of paper verifying that the training videos were viewed. If teachers transfer from another state, they still must go through the training within two years of being hired, and working teachers must go through training even if they were employed prior to the date the Florida Consent Decree was enacted.

New York:

In the 2012-2013 school year, New York held the fourth largest EL student population (237,499) (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015). Currently, TE programs for grades 7-12 require no additional or separate courses in order to prepare teachers to effectively teach ELs. When Zeidre (2005) inquired, officials in the New York licensure office suggested that the teacher education curriculum does not require training specific to ESL strategies, but it is intended to prepare its students to adapt to the needs of different and unique students, such as ELs.

Illinois:

Illinois reported 190,172 EL students in grades K-12 for the 2012-2013 school year, ranking the state as having the fifth largest EL population in the U.S (Ruiz Soto et al., 2015a).

Standard Number 3B of the “Illinois Professional Teaching Standards” states that the competent teacher “understands the process of second language acquisition and strategies to support the learning of students whose first language is not English” (Illinois Professional Teaching Standards, 2001, p. 4). While this standard is specific to social studies teachers, it can be applied to all secondary content area teacher requirements. However, in an interview conducted by O’Brien (2007), a top-five teachers’ college representative stated, “When it’s time for accreditation, there’ll be a ‘mad dash’ to find a syllabus that has the requirement listed on it. Trust me, they’ll all be covered somewhere” (p. 36). In other words, the state requires TE programs to provide training for preservice teachers regarding EL instruction, but the university representative clearly stated that the college did not explicitly offer ESL training to its preservice teachers.

The states mentioned previously have high EL student populations most likely as a result of the high population of immigrants that reside in these locations. Approximately 60% of immigrants who moved to the U.S. between 1995 and 2000 entered the country through these states and migrated mostly from New York and California (U.S. Census, 2000). Problems arise for school districts, however, when immigrants settle far from these traditional immigration hubs (Zhao, 2002). Schools districts that have historically enrolled homogenous, native-speaking students are now lacking teachers who are trained in the best ESL teaching strategies (O’Brien, 2007). Based on the data, the assumption can be made that a significant number of ELs are enrolled in U.S. schools, and that content area teachers are struggling to teach them effectively.

Pilot TE Program

In order for TE programs to begin responding to the unique and quickly growing needs of the EL student population in the U.S., the programs should place emphasis on training and

preparation regarding ESL instruction. In order for this change to begin, the faculty of such programs must be engaged prior to and during the curriculum development while curriculum developers and staff must be aware that changes in TE programs are not a one-time fix.

Furthermore, everyone involved in the change must provide ongoing efforts to support preservice teachers in the new program (Navarez, Sanford, & Parker, 1997; Costa et al. 2005). In 2003, a pilot program through a college of education that trains an average of 800 preservice teachers, 560 undergraduate and 250 graduate students from 30 different states per year, was tested to determine the increased training of teachers regarding ELs.

Since the state of the program had no formally-required bilingual education program, the faculty and developers identified activities and content that would be useful to their preservice teachers. The TE faculty concluded that information related to social issues regarding EL education was a prerequisite and an ongoing co-requisite for their course (Coast et al., 2005, p 116). TE faculty also recognized the need to show preservice teachers that they most likely had developed subconscious and preconceived assumptions about EL students, so the faculty collaborated to teach preservice teachers that “the social-class, cultural and language gaps between teachers and students call for teachers to critically understand their own ideological orientations about cultural, linguistic and class differences” (Bartolome, 2002, p. 168). In other words, the preservice teachers needed to realize that they bring biases into their classrooms, and they must work to view the cultures of their students as not exotic. One example of this bias is deficit theory, which involves teachers judging students based on the qualities they lack. When teachers believe that students are not capable of performing to a certain level, students will only produce the quality of work the teacher expects, and the students begin to personalize these ideas about themselves (Olvera, 2014).

As the course progressed, TE students examined standardized tests in math, history, science, and reading, and they found that the examinations were biased against non-native English students. The language of the assessment was clearly written for native English speakers of a certain dialect, and the syntax and verbiage for the questions and answers would be difficult for someone with limited knowledge of English. The participants discovered how this was decreasing the success of ELs on these examinations because the ELs sometimes lacked the knowledge of academic language needed to succeed on these tests (Costa et al., 2005). The TE students also determined that the language of standardized tests is often designed to trick people into choosing the wrong word, a practice that is especially confusing for EL students since they have not fully mastered the English language. As a result of this course, pre-service teachers reported feeling sympathy for students who did not speak native English and who struggled in English-only classes instead of exhibiting negative attitudes about extra workloads like some of the teachers in previously mentioned studies (Costa et al., 2005, p. 11).

Near the conclusion of the program, TE faculty presented one video to TE students that displayed information about the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model, and as a group, the class discussed how this model helps teachers differentiate instruction based on the needs of EL students (Echeverra, Vogt, & Short, 2000). Following the discussion of the SIOP model, pre-service teachers were required to practice using the strategies found in this model during their next school visits (Costa et al., 2005). TE faculty incorporated the SIOP model into the program because it has been recognized as an effective method for teaching EL students while assisting teachers in differentiating their instruction based on researched theories and pedagogical strategies. While there are other strategies available to help teachers meet the needs of ELs in their classrooms, the SIOP model has been successful (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013). In

the next section, we will examine this model as well as a developing framework known as the Differentiated Instruction in Academic Language model to determine effective ways for teaching EL students.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol

While it may be a concern that teachers consistently lack the adequate training needed to meet the needs of EL students in mainstream classes, research suggests that there are ways of teaching content and language demands simultaneously (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013). The researchers developed the Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) as part of a 7-year research project funded by the U.S. Department of Education and supported by the National Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) as a way of improving existing sheltered instruction plans. Sheltered instruction involves instructional techniques that provide EL students access to state curriculum and academic language simultaneously without watering down the material within lessons (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013). Within the sheltered instruction lessons, teachers provide lessons that facilitate learning in ways that students can learn new content even in through a second language. Sheltered instruction has historically been recognized as “sheltered English immersion (SEI), content and language integrated learning (CLIL) and specially designed academic instruction in English (SDAIE),” and all sheltered instruction terms represent environments in which the student is learning content through a secondary language (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013, p. 340).

Short and Echevarria (1999) recognized the need for a sheltered instruction model that provided clear expectations for effective teaching strategies regarding ELs and in 1997, and they began the project that led to the development of the SIOP model as an observation tool used to score teachers based on how well they could instruct ELs in their classrooms. Four schools, two from the west coast and two from the east coast, were included in the original research project. Teachers within the project attended several professional development training days to become familiar with the language and scoring rubrics of the SIOP including 30 items split into 8

categories that will be discussed later in this section.

After a few lesson reviews and scoring sessions, the teachers and researchers came to the agreement that the SIOP should be used to plan lessons if the lessons were to be scored by the 30 items, and at the end of the project, the researchers found that the areas needing most improvement in the participants lessons were lesson-planning, self-monitoring, and reflection (Short & Echevarria, 1999). The teachers participating in the project had “no sophisticated understanding” of the language acquisition process; therefore, they struggled to to integrate both language objectives and content material into the same lesson (Short & Echevarria, 1999, 11). It was clear that the lack of preparation in TE programs had not prepared teachers to meet the academic language needs of ELs while still teaching content material.

After the teachers in this project began planning and comparing their lessons according to the 30 scoring items in the SIOP model, the framework evolved into more of a lesson planning delivery approach rather than an observation and scoring tool (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013). The teachers believed that if they were to be scored according to the items from the SIOP, they should be able to plan their lessons according to the same requirements. The 30 items within the SIOP observation rubric were grouped into the following 8 components for scoring and evaluation.

Lesson Preparation

The SIOP model requires teachers to develop “content and language objectives” that are consistently explained, in view of the students, and verbally reviewed (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013, p.240). Objectives are typically related to the content and academic language skills that EL students need to master. Kavera and Echevarria (2013) argue that by having the objectives reviewed at the beginning of every lesson, students “know what they are expected to learn” by

the end of each lesson (p. 240). Teachers also must provide some form of modification for ELs to meet the SIOP requirements. Modifications can be made using handouts, translations, notes, illustrations, recordings of instructions, and supplementary materials including visual aids and study guides (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013).

Building Background

When teachers connect students' background knowledge and experiences with the content of the lesson, students can make meaningful connections with the material. When teachers can activate the prior knowledge of their student regarding the content of the lesson, they can begin establishing real-world connections between the students' lives and the new information while making it relevant to the student (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013). Teachers can and should use the experiences of their second language learners as resources for their classroom to provide insight or commentary on certain aspects of the lessons, and this practice allows EL students the chance to broaden their vocabulary and use any academic language they know, which relates to another the SIOP lesson requirements. Kavera and Echevarria (2013) explain that "effective SIOP teachers" allow students multiple chances to use new vocabulary and language skills in a variety of contexts and in different learning modalities (p. 241).

Comprehensible Input

The SIOP model encourages teachers to design lessons that include comprehensible input for ELs. Teachers should give instructions that are not too wordy or spoken too rapidly, and visual aids should be used to support less-proficient ELs, but Crossley, et al. (2007) suggest that teachers should limit simplifying instructions too often so ELs are still exposed to varied syntax and language. Kavera and Echevarria (2013) suggest that teachers can supplement instructions by restating, repeating, or writing main points and other strategies to provide comprehensible

input such as simulation, modeling, role-playing, and hands-on learning.

Strategies

When students understand learning strategies, they become more effective learners (Vaughn, Gersten, & Chard, 2000). Learning strategies are especially useful for EL students because they can use these strategies to offset some of the cognitive burden of learning language alongside content. According to Kavera and Echevarria (2013), by teaching learning strategies, teachers provide students with the ability to learn academic language and content in both the classroom and in the real world. The SIOP model also requires that teachers scaffold the students to higher levels of learning so that eventually students can perform tasks individually.

Interaction

SIOP teachers promote interaction between students and students and the teacher in order to provide EL students with the opportunity to learn conversational and academic language, and creating small groups and pairing ELs with other proficient speakers gives students the opportunity to ask questions and confirm that they have understood questions, instructions, or content (Kavera and Echeverria, 2013). Saunders and Goldenberg (2010) agree that EL students should be mixed with more-proficient speakers when the class is engaged in interactive lessons, but SIOP teachers must balance the conversations between students and between students and the teacher. Furthermore, teachers should never plan for “teacher-dominated linguistic environments” since students’ abilities to communicate with oral language skills directly influence their educational success (Kavera & Echavarria, 2013, p. 242).

Practice and Application

The SIOP model encourages teachers to allow students to practice new material using different modalities. SIOP teachers plan lessons with activities that allow students to apply

content and academic language through interactions involving hands-on activities and conversations with other students. If teachers are to meet the requirements of this aspect of the SIOP model, they must allow ELs the opportunity to interact with other students through multiple types of activities (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013).

Lesson Delivery

SIOP teachers develop routines so that students can easily identify new lesson material and objectives, and the activities and modifications within the lesson support the content and academic language objective for each lesson (Kavera and Echavarria, 2013). Teachers should reuse learning activities that students responded to well and utilize appropriate wait times after asking a question or calling on a student while pacing the lesson to match how fast the students are learning the material, according to the requirements of the SIOP model.

Review and Assessment

As a part of review and assessment, SIOP teachers should make time to review previous learning and content or language objectives. Throughout the lesson, teachers should check for understanding to ensure the lesson is not moving too quickly, and they can provide appropriate academic feedback for student responses. According to August and Shanahan (2008), ELs can greatly benefit from consistent and appropriate feedback from their teachers. Reviewing the lesson also gives teachers the chance to recover vocabulary and material that may help ELs retain the new information (Kavera & Echevarria, 2013).

If teachers can consistently implement the SIOP model in their classrooms, the achievement of ELs will improve (McIntyre, et al., 2010). If the model is used correctly and frequently, EL students will learn academic language and content at an accelerated rate, and teachers of all content areas can use the SIOP model to better their instruction (Kavera and

Echevarria, 2013). SIOP teachers can offer the high-quality instruction needed for EL students who are facing the issues of learning new content through a new language, and the clear content and academic language objectives can assist students in achieving greater academic success.

Furthermore, Kavera and Echevarria (2013) found that after just 3 years of using the SIOP model, one school reported that the state test scores of their EL students jumped from 20 points below the state average to 0.2 points above the average in reading, and the scores jumped from 28 points below the state average to 20 points higher than the average in math. These reports suggest that teachers need structured framework similar to the SIOP model if they are to provide adequate instruction that meets the content and academic language needs of EL students in mainstream classes. A major benefit of the SIOP model is that it can be used from pre-K all the way to the community college level (What Works Clearinghouse, 2013). Since the SIOP model can situate itself within so many different classroom cultures across different grade levels and content areas, the model can be used by just as many different teachers to effectively educate EL students.

Differentiating Instructional and Academic Language

With the assistance of a federally-funded professional development grant, researchers (Word & O'Brien, 2016) designed a pedagogic framework for teachers to improve their classroom instruction for ELs. This framework, known as Differentiating Instructional and Academic Language (DIAL), is based on the awareness that for learning to take place, students must understand the teacher's use of both the language of instruction (e.g., directions, management) and the academic language (e.g., specialized vocabulary, grammar, usage). Researchers (Cook, 2000; Chaudron, 1988) have analyzed communication in ESL classrooms, and they found that teachers perform approximately 70% of speaking in a classroom. Equipped with this knowledge, Word & O'Brien (2016) created a series of four, six-hour professional development workshops constructed to train teachers to properly modify instructional and academic language to meet the various needs of ELs. This professional development was designed to further equip teachers with the expertise needed to lower the cognitive difficulty for ELs while they learn content and English simultaneously.

When students are learning instructional language, there are four basic elements: input, intake, uptake, and output. Input is the stimulus, or the language, presented by the teacher. Intake is the process of the student attending to and understanding the language. Uptake represents the point at which the student involves the new information with pre-existing schema. Output consists of the student using the target structures (language or content) to produce something that demonstrates understanding of the language and content (Word & O'Brien, 2015). As stated earlier, research suggests that teachers are not sufficiently prepared to modify instruction to meet the needs of students with varied linguistic acquisition levels and backgrounds.

The goal of DIAL is to make teachers aware of their 'linguistic fingerprint' when

teaching content and language to ELs. Coulthard (2004) uses this term to describe language patterns that are “fixed and specific depending on the individual” (p. 432). If teachers use colloquial phrases or use complex syntax when speaking during instruction, ELs will be more likely to experience cognitive burden at a level that could interfere with their ability to comprehend instructional and academic language. Implementing DIAL in the classroom requires teachers to carefully consider their word choice while participating in both whole-group and individual instruction so ELs can successfully focus on content with comprehensible input/ While gathering data, Word & O’Brien (2015) discovered that elementary and secondary teachers were able to identify aspects of their language that seemed inaccessible to ELs and demonstrate alternative methods of sharing information in a way that is more comprehensible.

After participating in DIAL professional development activities, a majority of teachers (68%) were able to ‘script’ lessons that used effective differentiation of language for lower level ELs. Data regarding the impact of DIAL professional development activities is currently being analyzed (as of Spring 2017), and these researchers plan to present additional findings in the near future. The DIAL framework has the potential to aid teachers in modifying language use in the classroom in spite of their lack of familiarity with linguistic principles, noted by Lucas, Villegas, & Freedson-Gonzalez (2008).

Conclusion

Despite their growing presence in the nation's schools, ELs are faced with the reality that most teachers enter the classroom lacking sufficient training to help them learn content and language simultaneously. Appellate courts have consistently ruled that, regardless of immigration status, ELs hold a right to attend schools (*Plyler v. Doe*, 1982) and receive an education that meets their unique and varied needs (*Lau v. Nichols*, 1974). In February, 2017, Thomas Massie (R-Kentucky) proposed a bill to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education (Kamentz, 2017). The overarching idea behind this plan to eliminate the U.S. department of education suggests that, in doing so, the decisions regarding the education of individual students will return to the state and local levels. Freshman representative Andy Biggs, argues that the "education of our students should lie primarily with parents, teachers, and state and local officials who know how to meet their individual needs best" (U.S. House of Representatives, 2017). If state and local governments gain control of the education system, as Massie's bill entails, the federal government would have no influence to protect the rights of EL students in situations that foster discrimination or inaccessibility to an equal education. To avoid these issues, researchers need to analyze the academic outcomes of ELs by using control and experiment groups that display a demonstrable impact on EL test scores (or grades), compared to teachers who do not use DIAL or SIOP strategies in their classrooms. Upon assessing the outcomes of these future studies, educators, administrators, and governments can make informed decisions as to how they should train education professionals and educate their students.

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