RECOMMENDED PRACTICES FOR A NON-SPANISH SPEAKING LOWER-ELEMENTARY TEACHER IN A MANDATED ELL CLASSROOM.

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this review of literature was to describe the options available for grouping ELL students and to identify the most effective teaching practices that will assist students in gaining proficiency in English. As the number of English language learners continues to grow each year, schools are required to provide the necessary tools and support to students. Varieties of options are available to cluster students, many of which are discussed and analyzed in this paper. This paper concludes with specific recommendations for providing English language learners with the tools and resources necessary to gain proficiency and to be successful.
Chapter I – Introduction

Prior to moving to Arizona in 2008, the acronym ELL meant absolutely nothing to me. The acronym ELL stands for English Language Learners. Living in a small town in the Upper Peninsula, the population was primarily Caucasian with very few minorities. Two-thousand miles west, where I began my career, the world as I knew it, changed. I began teaching in a school that is 90% Hispanic students, which made me a minority. Some of these children are monolingual, and the majority of their parents are monolingual. To say I had culture shock would be a sheer understatement. I dove in, both feet first and cannot imagine what my life would be like if I had not taken this chance! Teaching an ELL classroom had me terrified at first. I speak absolutely no Spanish, and much of my class spoke little English. How was this going to work? To my surprise, it works very well. Children could not use my Spanish vocabulary as a brace to lean on because I did not have any Spanish vocabulary. Thus, they were forced to pick-up on English, and my job was to help them become proficient in it. For someone on the outside, the thought may seem impossible. I looked at it as a step outside my comfort zone and a challenge that I could not resist taking. The rest, as they say, is history!

Statement of the Problem

Having a language barrier between the teacher and student can cause setbacks during the delivery of lessons. When a lesson is taught in English, to a student who speaks and understands only Spanish, or another foreign language, learning often suffers and accurate assessment of understanding is more challenging. Finding resources, tools, and practices that will provide valuable lessons to be both taught and understood is the goal behind my research. Regardless of their language, ELL students are required to take the state assessments and are expected to pass them. Additionally, the state of Arizona expects that all students will become proficient in
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reading, writing, listening, and speaking the English language so going beyond the boundaries and barriers within the classroom becomes essential to provide each child with the best possible education and the means to be successful.

Research Question

As an ELL teacher, I find myself struggling to meet the immediate needs of my monolingual students because of the language barrier. When children are absorbed in the language for a number of months, they will slowly pick up on the necessary vocabulary to communicate his or her needs. The academic part of learning a second language does not fall into place for several months. What are the recommended practices for a non-Spanish speaking lower-elementary teacher in a mandated ELL classroom?

Background - Arizona’s Structured English Immersion Model (SEI)

SEI models are research-based and include three major components: policy, structure, and classroom practices. These components are uniform in all SEI models because they reflect legal requirements established in state law. However, the structure, and teaching components vary from school to school and classroom to classroom because of the size of the school, the location of the school, the grade levels at the school, the number of English language learners and the percentage of English language learners.

The first component is policy. Proposition 203 voted on in 2000, requires schools to teach all material and subject matter in English only (A.R.S. §15-752. English language education). The use of a minority language in an Arizona classroom for instruction would violate Arizona’s law. The Arizona law requires English language learners to be grouped in a structured English immersion setting. The goal for all English Language Learners in Arizona is for them to gain fluency in the English language in one school year. Arizona has specific time allotments set
forth for the instruction in an ESL classroom. Specifically, a minimum of four hours per day is to be dedicated to English language development. The four hours of English language development are broken down further into specific time allotments to specify the amount of time to be spent on reading, writing, grammar, and speaking. The number of minutes for each area depends on the grade level or students as well as the proficiency level. Arizona state law requires cost efficient, research-based models that meet all state and federal laws.

The second component of Arizona’s ESL model is structure. The structure of the SEI Models consists of multiple elements: SEI Classroom content; SEI Classroom program entry and exit; student grouping for SEI Classrooms, including grouping process and class size standards; scheduling and time allocations, and teacher qualification requirements. This structure is uniform for all SEI Models. The application of the grouping process will yield different classroom configurations based on the individual school’s number of ELLs, their proficiency levels, and their grade levels. The main determinant for grouping English language learners is the proficiency level that they have tested at, according to the AZELLA. The AZELLA is the assessment given in Arizona to determine English language proficiency. It tests reading, writing, listening, and speaking for every child that is classified as ELD. Both grade and proficiency level are necessary to properly and appropriately group students for success. Groupings for all grade levels are not the same; however, they are comparable. SEI Classroom entry and exit is determined solely by AZELLA score. Students whose AZELLA composite proficiency level scores are Pre-Emergent, Emergent, Basic, or Intermediate shall be grouped in SEI Classrooms. A new ELL student must take the AZELLA test when they are first enrolled in a school, unless they have been previously tested. Their proficiency level will determine the classroom
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placement. They will test on the AZELLA again at the end of that school year to measure growth (Arizona Department of Education, 2006).

The third component of the SEI model in Arizona includes classroom practices. The SEI model in Arizona mandates all classrooms are to be taught in English. The main objective of an SEI classroom is to teach one or two specific skills tied to the proficiency level of the students within the class. Teachers in an SEI classroom have specific training to teacher implementation, Discrete Skills Inventory and Discrete Skills Inventory Methods. A teacher must have the SEI endorsement on his or her Arizona teaching license to teach an SEI class. The focus of an SEI classroom is to assist students in becoming proficient in the English language. Teaching other subjects, such as Science and Social Studies becomes less of a priority with the key focus on reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar.

**Definition of Terms**

- **ELL** – English Language Learner
  - Indicates a person who is in the process of acquiring English and has a first language other than English (The Education Alliance: Teaching Diverse Learners, 2006).

- **ELD** – English Language Development
  - The teaching of English language skills to students who are in the process of learning English (Arizona Department of Education, 2006).

- **SEI** – Structured English Immersion
• Monolingual – proficient in one language only (in this case, one other than English) (Merriam Webster, 2012).

• AZELLA – Arizona English Language Learner Assessment
  o A standard based assessment that measures a student’s proficiency of the Arizona
    English Language Proficiency Standards (Arizona Department of Education, 2006).

• PHLOTE – Primary Home Language other than English (survey given to parents)
  o IF parents mark SPANISH as an answer to any one of the three PHLOTE
    questions, a student is automatically given the AZELLA test and considered an
    ELL student   (Where Children Succeed, 2012).

• Proficiency Level – the level of English Language proficiency as determined by the
  AZELLA (Arizona Department of Education, 2006).
  o Proficiency Levels: 1) Pre-Emergent 2) Emergent 3) Basic 4) Intermediate
    5) Proficient

• Discrete Skills Inventory – the specific teaching/learning objectives derived from the
  Arizona K-12 English Language Learner Proficiency Standards (Arizona Department of
  Education, 2006).

• NCLB – No Child Left Behind - No Child Left Behind requires all government-run
  schools receiving federal funding to administer a state-wide standardized test annually to
  all students. This means that all students take the same test under the same conditions
• TESOL – Teachers of English to Students of Other Languages
  o A term that is used to distinguish English language teaching as a professional activity that requires specialized training (TESOL International Association, 2001).

• NCATE – National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education
  o A national accrediting body for schools, colleges, and departments of education authorized by the U.S. Department of Education (TESOL International Association, 2001).
Chapter II – Review of Literature

When selecting education as a career choice, a multitude of certifications exist that allow teachers to select their area of interest to become qualified in. Each area has specified trainings, courses, and exams that are required in order to become highly-qualified. When I was offered a position as a second grade ELL teacher, my acceptance came with the agreement that my Structured English Immersion (SEI) certification would be completed that year. These requirements were fulfilled after researching and understanding what the certification entailed.

This chapter will provide information regarding the necessary education to obtain the credentials for teaching ELL. Additionally, information will be provided on how the ELL students are grouped amongst their peers. Furthermore, I will attempt to answer: What are the best teaching practices for ELL students, specifically when the ELL teacher does not speak a foreign language? Moreover, what happens when students do not test proficient in the lower elementary grades? My research review will look at the specific language needs along with the teaching practices that target the explicit needs of a second language learner.

Long-Term Language Learners

According to Thibeault, Kuhlman, and Day (2010), “English language learners (ELLs) in K-12 schools continue to increase in number across the country. In California alone, about 1.5 million students are not sufficiently proficient in English to perform optimally in mainstream classrooms” (p. 48). The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 emphasizes the need for highly qualified teachers, but just who is qualified to apply best educational practices to help ELLs reach their potential in an academic environment?

Recently, Olson (2010), gathered information from 40 school districts throughout California in 2009-2010, including 175,734 secondary school students, almost one-third of all
secondary school English Learners in the state. Olson collected information on students including age, grade level, gender, race and socioeconomic status. Additionally Olsen sought information on both academic progress as well as the language progress students were making. Olsen then compared the information amongst schools and districts to find commonalities and differences. Olsen (2010) noted that startling information emerged from the data showing that students were being left behind, parents were uninformed, educators were unaware and districts were left without a solution.

Olson found that most districts lacked a way of identifying ELL students within their schools. Only one in four of the districts had a formal way of identifying, counting, serving, or monitoring the services of their ELL population and their idea of how soon a student should reach proficiency varied from 5–10 years.

Olson concluded that in California, 59% of secondary second language learners are Long-Term Language Learners. This means they have been provided education in the United States for six years or more but have not reached English proficiency. Out of the three districts analyzed, 75% of ELLs are long-term learners (Olsen, 2010). Every school district has varying percentages. Olson found that long-term English Learners encompass 21% of one districts secondary school English Learner enrollment. In two-thirds of the districts, more than 50% of the secondary school English Learners are long-term English Learners. Lastly, in 13 of the 40 districts, more than three out of four secondary school English Learners are long-term English Learners.

Olsen cited many reasons for this, including weak, inconsistent, and poorly implemented programs and that these students have been taught by largely unprepared teachers. Among her recommendations, Olsen called for improving the capacity of teachers so that they have a better
understanding of the needs of ELLs and are more prepared to work with them (Olsen, 2010). Programs adhering to the TESOL/NCATE P-12 standards are designed to address the systematic shortcomings identified by Olsen and to prepare ESOL specialists to reduce the percentage of long-term ELLs.

**Teacher Education Programs/High Quality Instruction**

Many colleges and universities throughout the United States grant professional credentials to aspiring Preschool through 12th grade ESOL teachers to teach this growing ELL population. However, the requirements to work as an ESOL instructor vary from state to state, just as ESOL teacher-education curricula vary from institution to institution. Since 2001 there has been a national model that can be used to assess the quality of ESOL teacher-education programs: the TESOL/NCATE P-12 ESL Teacher Education Program Standards. This form of accountability provides for a systematic data-collection aligned to standards and categories of assessments (Ingersoll & Scannell, 2002).

When teaching the English language to any student for whom English is their second language, it is imperative to help them develop the language skills that they can later apply to academics and interactions with others. A special strategy for instilling the linguistic skills to English Language Learners is essential for any teacher (Peregoy & Boyle, 2008).

TESOL/NCATE national recognition represents a common ground amid a plethora of state-by-state licenses, certificates, and endorsements. Teacher candidates having successfully completed a TESOL/NCATE-recognized program are more likely to be prepared to embark on a career as a professional educator of ELLs specific to K-12 settings than those who have not. These programs provide teachers with specific skills and strategies necessary to target language needs in ELD students. Many general-education teachers have received little, if any,
postsecondary education addressing the specific needs of the culturally and linguistically diverse student. Candidates coming from a TESOL/NCATE-recognized program are ready to draw on a rich body of theory and research to inform their practice and meet their students’ distinct learning needs. According to Breen (2007), candidates are able to assume the role of an English-language development specialist, including collaborating or team teaching with peers. They are ready to become part of professional learning communities where their expertise plays a prominent, not a peripheral, role.

**Varied ESL Groupings among Peers**

In addition to teacher education programs, another strategy for teaching ELLs has been at the forefront of research. Thomas and Collier (2001) conducted a national study for school effectiveness for language minority student’s academic achievement. Thomas and Collier focused on analyzing the endless variety of education provided to language minority students across the United States in public schools. Their study was conducted across a five-year span from 1996–2001 focusing on long-term academic achievement of ELL students. The study of Thomas and Collier included both quantitative and qualitative research from five urban and rural school sites in the northeast, northwest, south-central, and southeast United States. This particular group of learners is currently under-educated, so Thomas and Collier looked at research that is data driven regarding design, implementing, evaluating, and reforming education of ELLs.

The five school districts participated in Thomas and Collier’s research anonymously. Within the five school districts, 210,054 student records were examined including student background, grade level, school programs attended, and academic achievement on assessments. Within the five school districts that were examined, they found that over 80 languages were
spoken within; however, Spanish was predominantly the largest. The studies focused on student outcomes from eight major different program types for LM students: 90-10 two-way bilingual immersion (or dual language), 50-50 two-way bilingual immersion, 90-10 one-way developmental bilingual education, 50-50 one-way developmental bilingual education, 90-10 transitional bilingual education, 50-50 transitional bilingual education, English as a Second Language (ESL) taught through academic content, and the English mainstream.

Looking at program comparisons first, researchers summarized English language learners’ long-term achievement on nationally standardized tests (ITBS, CTBS, Stanford 9, Terra Nova) in English Total Reading (the subtest measuring academic problem-solving across the curriculum, math, science, social studies, literature) for students who entered the U.S. school district with little or no proficiency in English in Grades K-1 and followed them to the highest grade level reached by the program to date (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

**English Mainstream**

According to Thomas and Collier (2001), the students who participated in the English Mainstream portion were those that had parents refusing the bilingual or English Language Services offered by the school. These students showed deficits in both math and reading by the time they reached 5th grade. These deficits were ¾ of a standard deviation in comparison to students who participated in either a bilingual or English Language service. Thomas and Collier found that the greatest number of students dropping out of school came from the English Mainstream students. The students who did not drop out finished 11th grade at the 25th NCE (12th percentile) on the standardized reading test.

**ESL Classes followed by Mainstream**
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Student graduates that received English Language Services for two to three years before entering an English Mainstream ranged from the 31st to the 40th NCE with a median of the 34th NCE (23rd percentile) by the end of their high school years (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

50-50 Transitional Bilingual Education

50-50 Transitional Bilingual Education included English Language Learners who were provided 50% of classroom instruction in Spanish and the other 50% of classroom instruction in English. This 50-50 program was in place for 3-4 years before students entered an English mainstream class. Results reflected that the students who participated, reached the 47th NCE (45th percentile) by the end of 11th grade (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

90-10 Transitional Bilingual Education

90-10 Transitional Bilingual Education is a program where 90% of instruction is taught in the minority language and 10% is taught in English. Each grade level has a gradual increase in the percentage of instruction being taught in English, until 5th grade when the students enter English mainstream. Students in 90-10 Transitional bilingual education reached the 40th NCE (32nd percentile) by the end of 5th grade. After 5th grade, students remain in the mainstream classroom with all instruction taught in English (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

50-50 One-way Developmental Bilingual Education

50–50 One-Way is one language group being school in two different languages. Students who were instructed through this English Language Service reached the 72nd percentile after taking part for four consecutive years. This program was in place in high achieving schools within the five districts that Thomas and Collier analyzed. The 50-50 one-way students outperformed their comparison English Language Learners who were in a different servicing program by 15 NCE’s. Once this group of students reached seventh grade, they were still
performing above grade level, at the 61st percentile on standardized tests (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

**90-10 One-way Developmental Bilingual Education**

90-10 One-way developmental bilingual education students received 90% of their instruction in the minority language in grades K-2, and gradually increased their English instruction each school year until Grade 5 where 50% was taught in English. ELLs who were provided this particular service reached the 34th percentile by the end of the 5th grade (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

**50-50 Two-way Bilingual Immersion**

50-50 Two-way bilingual immersion students includes two different language groups who receive their language servicing needs together, 50% in English and 50% in the minority language. The students in this group attended a school that had a high poverty rate and high mobility rate. Thomas and Collier found that 58% met or exceeded the state standards in reading by the end of 3rd and 5th grades.

**90-10 Two-way Bilingual Immersion**

90-10 Two-way bilingual immersion students performed at or above grade level in Reading when tested in Grades 1-5. At the completion of 5th grade, students were in the 51st percentile and were significantly outperforming their comparison groups in 90-10 transitional bilingual education and 90-10 developmental bilingual education (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

Upon conclusion of the research and data analysis, Thomas and Collier suggested that Enrichment 90-10 and 50-50 one-way and two-way developmental bilingual education (DBE) programs (or dual language, bilingual immersion) are the only programs that assist students to fully reach the 50th percentile in all subjects and to maintain that level of high achievement, or
reach even higher levels through the end of schooling. The fewest dropouts come from these programs (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

Furthermore, when English language learners initially attend isolated, remedial programs, as they are required to in Arizona, students do not close the achievement gap after reclassification and placement in the English mainstream. Instead, they maintain or widen the gap in later years. Therefore, their average achievement NCE at reclassification should be as high as possible, because this is likely to be their highest achievement level that they reach during their school years. Ideally, instructional gains are best accomplished in an enrichment (not a remedial) program (Thomas & Collier, 2001).

**Practical Teaching Strategies**

**Co-Teaching**

While learning the English language, ELLs are required to also learn grade level content material. Although many strategies exist for the teaching of second language learners, educators began looking at options to service the needs of ELLs without pulling them out of the classroom. According to Dove and Honigsfeld (2010), ELLs acquire their second language and achieve academic success most effectively when there is a focus on academic language taught through meaningful content. An ESL program model that was recently developed is Co-Teaching. This program incorporates both language and content into daily instruction and is co-taught between a mainstream classroom teacher and an ESL teacher (Dove & Honigsfeld, 2010). Co-teaching as an approach to teaching ELLs both mainstream content and English language skills is practiced in an increasing number of schools, because it allows teachers to meet the needs of ELLs by keeping them connected to the mainstream curriculum and by eliminating fragmented service delivery and social isolation. In the ideal co-teaching model, the ESL and mainstream teachers
plan and deliver instruction together to accommodate the diverse needs of their ELLs and teach academic language through mainstream content (Short & Echevarria, 2004).

According to Dove and Honigsfeld (2010), many schools are making a shift from ESL pull-out to ESL – mainstream co-teaching because research suggests that co-teaching can be one of the most effective ways to meet the needs of the growing ESL population.

In 2009, Hendrickson conducted a study at a Pre-K-8 school in a large Midwestern urban school district. Hendrickson’s study encompassed the 800 students in grades K-5, 65% of which are ELL and 97% of which qualified for free or reduced lunch. Within the K-5 building, there are 40 mainstream elementary teachers, seven ESL teachers, and one ESL coordinator. The seven ESL teachers are shared amongst grade levels in a co-teaching fashion. Hendrickson selected the teachers that she chose to interview and gather personal opinions from but included all teachers in the K-5 school for her data collection.

Hendrickson’s study provided the necessary elements in order for co-teaching to be successful. Parity, shared resources between co-teachers and developing and maintaining the co-teaching relationship were found to be the key essentials for success. Additionally, Hendrickson (2011) found that support from administration is critical for the ESL and mainstream co-teaching to be effective. Planning time and modeling are very important pieces of co-teaching and Hendrickson found these pieces were missing or ineffective within the urban school she studied. Additionally, professional development opportunities need to be provided to guide the practices of co-teaching. According to Hendrickson (2011), 40% of the teachers who were co-teaching had never been provided a training opportunity.

Co-teaching is one of multiple effective strategies to meet the needs of English Language Learners. When an ESL teacher with a mainstream teacher, ideas are shared, practiced are
combined, and learning is mastered because language is no longer a barrier within the classroom and students are exposed to grade level content without being removed from their classroom setting.

**Flexible Grouping**

Flexible grouping in an ESL classroom provides the comfort needed for second language learners to ask questions when directions or instruction is unclear. Students are more likely to participate in an environment that they feel safe and comfortable in. When placed in a smaller setting, ESL students will take risks and speak out, unlike when placed in a mainstream classroom. The purpose of creating groups within a classroom is to keep them fluid, or continuously changing.

Elbaum, Schumm, and Vaughn (1997), asked 549 students in grades 3rd – 5th questions regarding their opinions on flexible grouping, specifically in reading. These students were part of three different urban schools in Chicago. The questions were both open and closed ended, leaving students the option to tell their personal opinion, rather just circling one of a few multiple choice options. The purpose of the study was to provide insight from participants on the receiving end of flexible grouping, rather than just the teachers providing the instruction.

Some students in Elbaum, et al. (1997) study reported having little to no experience with flexible grouping. They stated the majority of instruction was taught whole group and assignments and work time was done alone, rather than in small groups or with partners. Additionally, the majority of participants reported that they liked mixed ability groups, specifically in reading. Elbaum, et al. (1997) found that same-ability groups were beneficial mostly to nonreaders.
Similar to the Elbaum, et al. study, Baumgartner et al. (2011) researched flexible groupings of ELLs. This study implemented a 19-stage structured reading program to improve the educational achievement of students. It focused on ensuring academic success for all learners through flexible grouping and differentiated instruction. A total of 87 students of second, third and seventh grades of two Illinois elementary schools participated in the study. The students were offered targeted reading lessons in their flexible groups that focused on letter-sound correspondence, common syllable patterns, syllable patterns, decoding skills, and reading comprehension strategies. Upon completion of the 19-stage program, the students who participated were using more reading strategies than they previously had. All three of the groups of students increased their reading scores; however, the seventh grade students showed the most growth. The researchers concluded that small group instruction and the use of varied instructional strategies and materials favor the improvement of reading competencies (Baumgartner et al., 2003).

Similarly, a five-year longitudinal study was conducted in a Connecticut elementary school. This study focused on the reading progress of 435 students who participated in flexible grouping regularly. The progress of students in this particular study was measured using both the Qualitative Reading Inventory and CMT Reading. The results of this research showed that students who participated in flexible grouping starting in first grade, showed the most academic growth in reading over the course of the five-year study (Castle, Baker, Deniz & Tortora, 2005). Castle, et al. found that for the flexible groupings to be effective, the teacher must know his or her students and pay careful attention to how they are grouped. This particular research study found that students having the same or similar needs must be grouped together in order to target their needs. Castle, et al. also stated that groups must often be reconfigured so that the needs and
the progress of all students are always respected. According to Castle and his collaborators (2005), the most important advantage of flexible grouping is that it keeps students’ attention fixed on a precise objective while working in a smaller group setting.

Specifically related to English Language Learners, Arizona requires all ELL students to be grouped together in one classroom, regardless of their proficiency level. This essentially is both mixed and same ability grouping in that the students are the same due to all being ELL but are mixed because their proficiency levels vary dramatically. Elbaum, et al. (1997) of the Department of Teaching and Learning at University of Miami suggested that although researchers acknowledge that grouping practices may not, in and of themselves, lead directly to reading achievement or attitudinal outcomes, the way students are grouped within a classroom can influence these outcomes in a variety of ways. Elbaum, et al. looked at a variety of groupings of students both in ELL and regular education. Regardless of how students are grouped, groupings will have an effect either positive or negative on student achievement.

When same-ability groups are formed, it is easier for the teacher to focus on specific skills that the students are lacking. For example, with groups of non-readers, focusing on letter sounds would be beneficial to all students in this particular grouping. On the contrary, students do not have “model” students to help them become readers through demonstration. Mixed-ability groups also have pros and cons. When students are grouped by mixed abilities, it is easy to partner a high reader and a low reader so students can help each other. Subgroups of needs allow young readers to read texts of different levels of difficulty, and they also offer students differentiated learning opportunities (Radencich & McKay, 1995). The downfall to mixed ability groupings is, the high student is no longer being challenged and may regress because they
are partnered with someone significantly lower and are used as a “teacher” to them, rather than a learner themself.

Both co-teaching and flexible grouping have positive effects on student achievement. Both of these teaching strategies have been found to be effective in the classroom, especially for ELD students. Co-teaching and flexible grouping have multiple components to them that can be changed or differentiated to meet the needs of specific students.
Chapter III – Results and Analysis Relative to the Problem

This chapter will provide a synthesis of the studies that I have researched and reviewed in chapter II. My goal for this chapter is to look at many of the studies from each subtopic and synthesize them in an effort to answer my research question.

Teacher Education Programs/High Quality Instruction

Researchers have suggested that the quality of instruction that English Language Learners receive directly influences the progress toward proficiency they make. Although No Child Left Behind requires all teachers to be highly qualified, most states do not require core content teachers to have any training in English as a second language.

It is imperative that teachers of ELL students understand their linguistic needs and provide rich, meaningful lessons that promote growth in language acquisition. Effective ELL teachers encourage the interaction between peers and promote the 50/50 rule of 50% of the talking is done by the teacher and 50% of the talking is done by the students. Teachers who fail to differentiate instruction for diverse abilities do a major disservice to students that are still acquiring the English language. To teach at students and provide a lecture like atmosphere in an ELL classroom is ineffective. Students need to be engaged, active participants in the learning and continuously talking in both small and whole group to learn.

Until recently, no explicit model existed for effectively delivering sheltered language lessons and few research studies had been conducted to determine what constitutes an effective sheltered language lesson (August & Hakuta, 1997). Many educators agree that there are essential strategies that when used in an ELL classroom, show the most gains toward proficiency. These strategies include slower speech, clear enunciation, use of visuals and pictures, targeted vocabulary, connections to real life student experiences, and use of
supplementary materials (Genesee, 1999). By implementation alone, ELLs are not ensured academic success. Without methodical language development, many students never achieve the academic literacy skills needed to succeed in mainstream classes, to meet content standards, and to pass standardized tests (Short & Echevarria, 2004).

**Varied ESL Groupings**

Within the past five years, there has been a noted growth of 65% in students being enrolled in ELL programs, in comparison to the previous decade (Department of Education, 2007). Over 5 million students in the United States have limited English Proficiency. Due to the continued growth of our ELL population, states have made English Language Development more of a priority within their school systems. Although all children are different and learn differently, we require all students to test the same using standardized assessments, and expect them to pass regardless of their ability level, language proficiency level or individual needs. As a result, multiple programs options have been developed to service the needs of ELL students both in and out of the mainstream classroom.

Each method used to service language needs in ELL students has shown to be effective to some extent, although some programs provide better long-term results. When students are serviced through ESL pull out programs, they are provided targeted instruction on English Language Development. Although extremely beneficial, they are missing their core, grade level content material, which they will be tested on and expected to know. These students typically show bigger gains in language but small gains at grade level. Students serviced in the classroom are taught grade level material, but in a language (English) that they are not proficient, so much of the material is not processed or retained. They typically take longer to acquire the English language since they are grouped amongst already proficient peers.
Every state has different laws and programs in place to meet the needs of second-language students. Like anything, what works for one group of students may or may not work for another group. The type of program used on students should vary depending on the specific proficiency level and needs of individual students. Schools with a high population of ESL students typically offer multiple program options to service language needs. Parents have a voice in the placement of their child. In other schools or states with a high population of ESL students, such as Arizona, the state mandates where the students will be placed and how they will be grouped, and it remains the same for all schools and students. In the specific case of Arizona, ESL students are segregated into classes of only ESL students and are taught using a very specific SEI model. If whole classes cannot be made at a grade level, classes can be banded together including up to three grade levels in one class, in order to make a full ESL class. Few exceptions are made, other than the parent’s option to “opt out” of the ESL program. Whether students opt out or not, they are still required to take the state language test and show proficiency, for three consecutive years.

**Practical Teaching Strategies**

Teachers should strive to incorporate student-centered learning strategies in their ELL classrooms daily. Research shows that effective teaching strategies accommodate the needs of diverse learners in a mainstream classroom. Co-teaching and collaborative or flexible grouping are two of many strategies that can be integrated into the classroom and provide meaningful instruction to students.

Cooperative learning strategies and flexible grouping must be clearly structured and specify tangible goals and should be designed with critical thinking skills at the forefront. Student creativity and providing varying levels of involvement are also essential when teaching
students with varying language needs. Through cooperative learning and flexible grouping, teachers can add spice to their teaching and avoid the worn out teaching methods of teacher-centered learning and lecturing.

Cooperative learning is a broad and multifaceted concept that can be applied to a variety of different formats and generally refers to many varied ways to structure a class in small, heterogeneous student groups (usually of two to six members, with four an ideal size) to accomplish individual or group goals for learning that require cooperation and positive interdependence (Ovando & Collier, 1998).

In both Bilingual and ESL Classrooms, Ovando and Collier recommend a vigorous, inquiry-based learning style as an effective method for students to become dynamically engaged in solving a problem, discovering new ways of perceiving their world, passionately applying learning strategies to the next task, developing family-like community among classmates, sharing the excitement of a special discovery. This hands-on, student-centered approach to learning can be easily developed by consistently including cooperative learning strategies.

In addition to cooperative learning, co-teaching can be effective in reaching the needs of English language learners. Co-teaching takes the “my kids and your kids” philosophy out of education creating “our kids.” It fosters an environment in which all students are important members of the classroom community and none of them are singled out or feel left behind because of language barriers. When two teachers team up together, it brings the student-teacher ratio down, allowing students more individualized or small group instruction time with teachers.

**Summary**

Although English language learners have been a part of our schools for a number of years, it was not until recently that the number of ELLs have dramatically increased. With this
increase in population of second language learners, meeting ELLs’ needs has become a challenging issue. Each state has a different philosophy of how these students should be taught and how they should be grouped. Some states are finding ESL students to be the majority in their districts whereas others have so few that they do not service them any different than a regular education student. Regardless of what program these students are placed in, the ultimate goal is for a second language student to gain proficiency in English. Many strategies have been researched and analyzed with not one standing out as the best choice. Just as all general education students learn differently, so do ESL students. To create one plan to use for all ESL students would do them a huge disservice and make their already challenging school experience a nightmare.
Chapter IV: Recommendations and Conclusion

Recommendation

The ELL population continues to grow each year as more people make the United States their home. As people move into this country, they bring with them the language of their homeland. Although their native language is important, it is equally as important for students enrolled in the public schools to become proficient in the English language.

As more researchers tackle the topic of meeting the needs of English language learners, many of them are finding consensus on several of the important issues being researched. Those devoting their time to researching ELL teaching practices are found to be focusing on student outcomes from the various groupings and strategies being used. Although not exclusive, the following have been found to be key components to the effective teaching practices of ELLs:

- Clear student friendly objectives
- Concise and attainable goals
- Planned instructional routines
- Modeling
- Student engagement strategies
- Positive feedback
- Application of new learning
- Peer interactions
- Formative and informative assessments

Teachers who provide explicit skill instruction, student-directed activities, instructional strategies that enhance understanding, opportunities to practice, systematic student assessment, and a balanced curriculum, either alone or in combination, have the strongest academic outcomes
for ELLs (August & Hakuta, 1997). Through explicit skill instruction, teachers demonstrate how to complete a task. The routines and language used by the teacher provide the learner with clear, easily understood procedures and expectations. In addition to explicit skill instruction, effective ELL teachers should provide many opportunities for students to practice what they are learning. Engaging students throughout a lesson and using the I Do, We Do, You Do model, allows ample time for students to demonstrate mastery or show a need for additional support. Furthermore, ELL teachers must adjust their language to a level easily understood by their learners. When using consistent vocabulary in a lesson, ELL students can focus on the lesson rather than trying to decipher the meaning of the vocabulary.

ELLs can benefit from effective reading instruction even before they are fully proficient in English as long as the instruction is comprehensible (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2004). Building a solid foundation of vocabulary is the most crucial step in building literacy for English language learners. Students need to be taught how to learn vocabulary in addition to being taught the vocabulary itself. It is impossible to teach any child every vocabulary word they will need to know so giving them the skills necessary to build their vocabulary bank will help her take ownership of the learning.

In addition to building vocabulary, ELL students much like regular education students will need to develop strategies for reading comprehension. So often educators focus on reading fluency and leave out the comprehension piece. ELLs use the same cognitive strategies as non-ELLs to comprehend the text they read (Linan-Thompson & Vaughn, 2004). To be an effective ELL teacher, one must know how to teach a child how to read and teach a child how to learn from her reading.

**Areas of Further Research**
Due to the changing economy, many of the families that are second language learners are also migrant workers, meaning they travel to remain employed. With families constantly on the move, students are at a disservice when they move from one state to another and receive different language services in each. The United States is currently making the shift from teaching state standards, to teaching common core standards. With this shift, students who move around will still be required to learn the same standards from one state to another. To go along with this change, creating a balanced ELL plan would be beneficial. Creating a more standardized plan for ELL students in every state may be effective long-term.

In order to create this balance, further studies must be done. First, it would be important to know the percentage of ELL students each state has and the programs used to service their language needs. Many programs from state to state are similar, but have different names or slightly different components. Once that data is collected, a random sample of students in each state and part of each of the different programs will need to be selected. By selecting at random, a variety of age levels will be studied, varying socio economic statuses will be reviewed and both genders will be a part of the study.

As a part of the study, it will be important to get input from the parents and students as well as the teachers and schools. A survey could be administered to both parents and students individually, to determine their input on the success of the program they are participating in as well and the positives and negatives of it. The teachers’ input will be necessary to provide the strengths and weaknesses of the students being serviced in each program as well as their growth. The school can provide the qualitative data, from standardized tests over a few year spans, to show whether each program is successful.
Once the data from every program and every state are provided, it will be necessary to examine and analyze it thoroughly. Looking at the components of each program first, will allow researchers to combine and eliminate any that are similar or the same. Once eliminations have been made, the data reported in each program will speak for itself. Programs that show tremendous growth over time for the majority of the participants will likely be selected and implemented in the majority of the states throughout the country. Furthermore, programs with less growth can easily be eliminated and replaced with something more successful.

The result of this study was not to find one program that the needs of every English language learner nationwide, but rather a small assortment of programs that vary in style and technique. In doing so, each learner will be able to take the information with them when/if they move to another state and be placed back in the same program they were in previously. Having only three of four programs nationwide will allow for less change when students move.

**Conclusion**

As researchers and teachers continue to learn more about effective approaches for teaching ELL students, it is likely that ELL students will need less time in select language programs and will transition to mainstream classrooms much faster. In addition, the multitude of studies that are being conducted on teaching practices should help second language students gain English proficiency much faster than they have in the past. English language learners were once a minority within our schools but in many districts they have become the majority. It should be educators’ goal for ELLs to flourish.

As our once minorities become the majority in our school systems, it is imperative that the best teaching practices are utilized to help them gain proficiency in the English language while learning and mastering grade-level standards. Many of these students come with little or
no formal education, in addition to being monolingual. Finding the program to best suit their needs is crucial in order to help them make the gains in their areas of deficit. ELL students are tested the same as a general education student and are expected to make the same gains. They are required to pass the state mandated language test in addition to passing the state standardized test on grade level standards. These students typically come to school with deficiencies in reading and writing, yet they are expected to perform the same as students who has have had continuous formal education in the US. Teachers of ELL students need to bond together, put in place the most effective techniques and strategies, and give these students the best possible education.
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