The Development and Evaluation of an In-service Training for Informing Elementary School Personnel About Culturally Responsive Assessment and Instruction for English Language Learning Students

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The Development and Evaluation of an In-service Training for

Informing Elementary School Personnel About

Culturally Responsive Assessment and Instruction for

English Language Learning Students

By

Mallory Whitney Poole

Creative Project

Submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements

For the degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

In

Special Education

Committee

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Dr. Lillian Durán (Chairperson)  Dr. Susan Turner (Committee Member)

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Utah State University

Logan, Utah

2013
Foreword

The final slide in the power-point training is a photo of my student Alan Zapata. He was my student for three years. Alan was identified as an ELL student with a learning disability. There were two children in his family and he was the first person in his family to learn English, in addition, he was the translator for his parents in most situations. He even translated when the family would come to parent teacher conferences. Alan loved soccer and was at a team soccer practice in Provo when he collapsed. His coaches did call 911 but he was non-responsive when the EMT’s arrived and was flown to Primary Children’s Hospital in Salt Lake. Alan was in a coma and continued to be non-responsive. I visited him twice when he was in intensive care and it had a profound impact on me. I had had an immediate family member in a coma a few years earlier.

There were interpreters there occasionally, but Alan’s parents did not understand all of the implications of his condition. When I was at the hospital I was able to explain to his parents what was actually happening in a way they understood. His heart had stopped. (A similar situation had occurred less than a month earlier at Utah State University with a varsity basketball player, but they did have a defibrillator on-site and were able to save his life). Alan’s parents eventually made the decision to have him disconnected from life support. His death impacted me emotionally and, impacted my masters’ program classes and assignments. I participated in the bereavement and funeral services and spent a large amount of time helping with fundraisers to assist the family in raising money to pay for the funeral expenses. Funds were raised and he was laid to rest in his small hometown in Mexico. He is a true example of the need for this research and training.
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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to develop and present a training session for elementary school teachers and other Personnel who teach and work with English Language Learners (ELL). The training provides information on evidence based instructional strategies to help teachers improve their teaching methods with students who speak languages other than English. The lack of teacher knowledge in utilizing culturally and linguistically responsive teaching methods may be contributing to the over identification of ELLs in special education. This situation reinforces the need for additional teacher training for those who teach students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This creative project fills a need in the field by (1) accessing teacher needs and presenting improved educational strategies for elementary school teachers serving ELLs, (2) developing and making available a training including input and responses for a needs assessment, (3) providing the initial training, (4) including a section on instructing and understanding how a second language acquisition process goes through a sequential series of stages, (5) measuring the effectiveness of the training via pre-post tests administered to the participants.
Introduction

General education teachers face many obstacles when working with students from diverse cultures who are in the process of learning English as a second language. English language learners (ELLs) is a widely accepted term used to describe students who speak languages other than English at home and who come to school with limited proficiency in English. This project’s training focuses on providing information to elementary school teachers to help them to better serve ELL students.

General education teachers working with ELL students face the challenge of effectively teaching these students. Many teachers lack current knowledge about evidence-based teaching practices for ELLs; have an inadequate understanding of bilingual language development; and insufficient knowledge regarding the key concepts of being able to distinguish between a second language acquisition issues and a language impairment in their ELL students. Teachers also struggle to find the time to increase their understanding of the varied and changing techniques currently available to effectively teach this diverse group of students.

Since 1980, Utah’s population has increased by 90 percent and its foreign-born population by 341 percent (Ruark, 2012). Since that same decade, the ELL population in the United States increased approximately 101 percent and statistics support that this trend will continue (Thomas & Collier, 2002; United States Census Bureau, 2011). ELL students in the United States are more likely to grow up in poverty, which impacts their education. Muller reports they are at-risk for low academic achievement and inappropriate special education referrals or placement (Muller, 2006). In that this paper is being written in Utah, it is valid to point out that Utah teachers face the additional
obstacle of higher numbers of pupils in their classrooms than other states in the country (Ruark, 2012). In addition, there are diverse opinions about how to best educate ELL students. As a result, these factors have all come together to create challenges for teachers to succeed in their classrooms where students are more diverse than ever.

This creative project provides training for general elementary personnel that are focused on improving teaching strategies with ELLs. A pre-training information survey and pre/post-test assessments were given to the teachers and staff who participated in the training. The goal was to provide an improved understanding of strategies that are effective in teaching ELL students. This type of training may help reduce the number of ELLs referred for a special education evaluation and may reduce the problem of overrepresentation of ELL students in special education programs in the participating district.

The Problem

Recognizing that many teachers may have had little to no personal contact with cultures and languages different from their own, professional development was provided that may assist in the development, awareness, and insights of teachers who need to respond to the diversity of their students and their learning needs. Kidd and colleagues (2008) conducted a study on the defining moments in teaching practices and the college courses available to educators focused on teaching ELL students. They concluded that there is still a great deal of work ahead for those who are striving to transform teacher education programs (Kidd, Sanchez, Thorp, 2008). These authors discussed effective practices to improve teacher knowledge and competence in this working with ELL. A practice they referred to was the regular verbal sharing of diverse teaching experiences by
teachers. They also studied pre-service teachers having experiences with students of diverse populations and concluded these experiences helped the pre-service teachers better understand the impact and influence their culture had on the students’ learning. 

ELL students in Utah, as across the United States, lag behind the general student population and perform poorly on standardized tests. Even though the four-year high school graduation rate for students with limited English proficiency has risen nearly 30 percent since 2008, it is still only at 45%, with the dropout rate listed as 52% (Ruark, 2012). This same source reported the end of level Criterion Reference Test (CRT), which is required for all public school students to test their mastery of the Utah core curriculum— even though they can benefit from special language accommodation on the test, scored significantly lower in all of the core tests given. ELL students in Utah scored consistently lower in reading and mathematics with the gap growing larger in the upper grades; even after these students had been in the public school system for many years. On the science portion of the 2010 CRT 18% of limited English proficient students passed the proficiency level compared to 73% of their native-English speaking peers who passed (Ruark, 2012). It is a disservice to all children when their educational needs are not being met.

**Literature Review**

**Population Statistics**

Immigrants and their children were responsible for 80% of the total increase in the United States population between 2000 and 2010, according to the Center for Immigration Studies (Camarota, 2012). In 2009, approximately 57.1 million people, about 20 percent of the population, spoke a language other than English at home (United
States Census Bureau, 2011). According to the 2010 U. S. Census, between 2000 and 2010, the Hispanic population grew by 43%, which was four times the growth in the total population, which was at 10%. These figures are important to Utah teachers because Utah has the eighth fastest growing limited English proficient population in the United States (Ruark, 2012). The Census Bureau estimated that 13% of Utah residents between the ages of 5 and 17 speak a language other than English in their homes (United States Census Bureau, 2011).

The number of limited English speaking students in Utah has risen at rate that was faster than the growth rate of the overall public school enrollment. In addition, in 2011 the total number of ELL students with limited English proficiency was over 9% of the students in Utah. During the 2010-2011 school year, ELL students comprised 2,881 of the total 66,044 students in the Utah’s Alpine School District, which is the district where the project’s training was given. However, it was interesting to note that the growth has not been evenly spread throughout the state. Half of all ELL students in Utah attend school in only three districts; and they are Salt Lake, Granite, and the Ogden school districts. The Salt Lake School District had the highest percent of ELL students in Utah with 30%. They are followed by the San Juan School District with 29.8%; and this is because San Juan has a small population so the comparison does boost the percentage up to a higher number. The Granite School District had the highest number of ELL students enrolled with the count being 16,345. As a result of this large number of ELL students attending schools in this district, the cost for Granite District’s Limited English Proficient (LEP) program students was $122.3 million during the 2010-1011 school year (Ruark, 2012). This same source reported it costs twice as much to teach an ELL student as it
does an English-speaking student. Her report emphasized that Utah has the lowest per pupil spending in the nation and the federal government only provides funds to cover just over 1% of the cost of remedial education for ELLs in Utah. Statistics from the Utah Department of Education report that for the 2010-2011 school year per pupil spending was $6,375 and the cost for educating a LEP student amounted to $8,288. This research stated that in 2010 the United States Department of Education allocated $4,777,664 to Utah for Title III education which funds LEP programs. The total cost of LEP education for the 2010-2011 school year paid by Utah taxpayers was $443,130,720 (Ruark, 2012).

**Legislation Involving English Language Learners**

It is imperative for schools to make sure their general education teachers involved in teaching ELL students gain a better understanding of laws and legislation which have direct relevance to the functioning of their classrooms. Multiple pieces of legislation have impacted the education of ELL students. The first law directed toward regulating second language learning was the Bilingual Education ACT of 1968. The Improving America’s School Act (IASA) of 1994 was an early federal policy designed to meet the needs of diverse learners in the United States public school system. Later followed by the Title III (Language Instruction for Limited English Proficient and Immigrant Students) of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, the bilingual education program and the immigrant education program were consolidated in a formula-driven state grant program with all funds being awarded at the state level.

General education teachers need to be aware that current law mandates all ELL students must be tested at least once a year using an English proficiency test. The law requires ELL students to meet specific annual targets of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)
and local and state Education Agencies are held accountable for ensuring ELL meet these targets. The Department of Education requires the State and Local Educational Agencies to submit and gain approval of their education plans to receive Title III funding. General education teachers are asked to submit information that is utilized in these education plans (Reed & Railsback, 2003). The training connected with this project presents a brief background on the laws and legislation concerned with the education of ELL students. This is because all teachers need to be aware of these laws and the direct impact they have on how a school qualifies to receive government money. In classrooms with linguistically diverse populations, general education teachers must ensure that their curriculum and teaching strategies are in alignment with the English Language Proficiency Standards. The educational training portion of this presentation will help the participating elementary teachers in two schools in the Alpine School District better understand these laws and regulations.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1997 specified that educators should assess second language students in their primary language whenever feasible. Several research reports cited in the literature review for this paper indicated services for ELL were reported to be inadequate in many schools across the nation (Muller, 2006; Ruark, 2012). This underscores the need for additional training for teachers. The recent Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA, 2004), reauthorization changed the original wording in this bill to say, “assessments should be provided and administered in the language and form most likely to yield accurate information on what the child knows and can do academically, developmentally, and functionally; unless it is not feasible to so provide or administer” (Muller, 2006).
The basic provisions of this federal law were included in the content of the educational training presentation to insure participating general education teachers also have an understanding of the testing requirements when a child is referred for a special education evaluation.

**Second Language Acquisition**

An understanding of second language acquisition process can improve the ability of general education teachers to serve linguistically diverse students in their classrooms. Significant professional development opportunities for teachers are necessary so they can gain a full understanding of second language acquisition theory. A segment of the training focused on the language acquisition stages.

The Reed and Railsback research study maintained there is a continuum of learning that is predictable and the continuum has sequential stages of language development. They are: Silent or Production Stage, Early Production Stage, Speech Emergence Stage, Intermediate Language Proficiency Stage, and the Advanced Language Proficiency Stage (Reed & Railsback, 2003). Understanding the theory that students are going through a predictable and sequential series of developmental stages helps general education teachers predict and accept a student’s current stage, while modifying their instruction to encourage progression to the next stage. These same researchers believe a basic knowledge of language acquisition theories is extremely useful for mainstream classroom teachers. In addition, they believed it is especially important in those schools or districts where limited resources result in little or no instructional support in a student’s native language. In these “sink-or-swim” situations, a committed mainstream teacher with a clear understanding of language acquisition can make all the difference.
(Reed & Railsback, 2003). This may, also, help teachers distinguish between a language impairment and typical second language development.

**Assessment of English Language Learners**

Some of the current interventions being utilized by general education teachers in pre-referring ELL students are not appropriately addressing the language support needed for ELL students. The practice of identifying students, who speak languages other than English during their assessments for special education services, is resulting in their overrepresentation in special education classrooms in the United States (Baca & Cervantes, 1998; Waitoller, Artiles, & Cheney, 2010).

In a lecture presented at the 2011 annual meeting of Teaching English to Students of Other Languages (TESOL) in New Orleans, Alfredo J. Artiles, a professor at Arizona State University, stated that a considerable proportion of school districts across the United States had ELL overrepresentation in special education programs. He posted information that reported Utah as one of the top 12 states with ELL student enrollment. However, by the time these Utah ELL students reach high school only .09 percent are placed in AP math classes, and .15 percent are enrolled in AP Science classes (Artiles, 2011). Artiles, a researcher with numerous publications, referred to his earlier research where these statistics showed that the Opportunity to Learn indicators proved Utah schools need improvement in their teaching programs for ELL students (Artiles, 2004). These percentages are similar for each of the other 12 states with high numbers of ELLs.

A study conducted by Muller maintained general education teachers might over-refer ELL if they do not understand how students of diverse cultures learn a new language and how they learned academic concepts. These students place demands on the
public schools including the need for educators to be trained in effective ways to teach ELL students (Muller, 2006). There is extensive research on ELLs, but there is little research or guidance on the strategies general educators can use (Muller, 2006). This project’s training will better prepare elementary teachers to consider some of the main strategies and areas of concerns, which may help them when referring ELL students, and avoid inaccurately recommending them for the special education evaluation process. If elementary teachers utilize this educational training to improve their teaching strategies of ELLs, then it may help improve part of the problem of overrepresentation of these students in special education programs.

Current practices of identifying students of other languages for special education services sometimes do not distinguish between a language acquisition process and a learning disability (Barker & Grassi, 2010). Research conducted by this team reported that inexperienced general education teachers contributed to the inadequate distinction in recommendations. They also stated that some of the standardized assessments are not culturally neutral (Barker & Grassi, 2010). General education teachers were encouraged to participate in the training to assist them in accurately performing the assessments.

Another component of ELL education is that culturally diverse students are sometimes inappropriately classified with disabilities because of inadequate interventions or cultural bias. Culturally biased assessments contribute to the over identification of minority students being placed in the special education classrooms. The overrepresentation of ELL in special education is a concern of educators (Peña, Bedore & Gillam, 2011). General education teachers will benefit from the training because it may
help them understand when a pre-referral for special education is warranted; because these teachers use assessments to guide their instruction and test student knowledge.

**Studies Utilizing Effective Training**

Everyone involved with ELL learning programs would benefit if schools made sure their general education teachers gained a better understanding of programs, laws, principles, and strategies that have been proven successful in the education of ELL students. The Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education maintains it is not enough to teach language-minority students reading skills alone. Extensive oral English development must be incorporated into successful literacy instruction. Teacher preparation, administrative support, and effective monitoring of learning have all been proven in research to contribute to successful literacy development of adolescent English language learners (Office of English Language Learning & Migrant Education, 2013). This Office promotes the concept that general education teachers need to understand that the most successful literacy instructional practices for ELL students are programs that provide instructional support of oral language development in English and are aligned with high-quality literacy instruction.

It is important to stress to educators that customized teaching for culturally and linguistically diverse students is vital. Teachers should relate the context of the concept being taught to the students’ lives because it can help them in retaining that concept and the new knowledge. They may understand how something they learned in class will play out in the real world (Office of English Language Learning, 2013). For instance, participating teachers will be taught that it is important for ELL students to understand
the value of money and relate it to the idea they can buy a candy bar or other items with money.

Researcher Lily Wong-Fillmore (2000) reported that the challenge of providing excellent teacher preparation and ongoing professional development for teachers is enormous at any time. Her research listed five functions which teachers of ELL must know/be: (a) A communicator with strategies for understanding what students are saying; (b) An educator responsible for selecting the right educational materials and activities; (c) An evaluator who judges student placement, promotion, or referral for evaluation; (d) An educated person with basic information about language; (e) A teacher as an agent of socialization of students’ values, beliefs, and culture. Because of the lengthy list of teacher expectations and requirements, teachers often do not have time for substantial attention to other crucial matters. They choose instead to follow a checklist approach in addressing the various required competencies (Fillmore, 2000). These five recommendations are presented in the training portion of this research and hope to assist the general education teachers in their efforts of teaching students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

**Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol**

Sheltered English Immersion is where curriculum is taught to ELL students in simplified English or the teacher may decide to use her own curriculum for teaching English. Jelinek and Sinclair recommend that teachers could utilize a Sheltered Instructional Observation Protocol (SIOP) system that allowed self-directed teacher development. Unlike a weekend workshop approach, their SIOP approach encouraged
teachers to use what they learned the next day in their own classrooms (Jelinek & Sinclair, 2003).

**Motivational Strategies and High Expectations**

In pursuing other aspects of effective training, research has proven that immediate, appropriate, corrective feedback, as well as praise should be given to ELL students (National Clearinghouse of English Language Accusation, NCELA, 2011, spring). All teachers need to be instructed that clearly defining objectives and finding materials to support the vocabulary is vital in the success of English language learners. These rationales were taught to elementary school educators to help provide more effective teaching and assist them to more effectively engage their students in the learning process.

If teachers’ expectations are great, ELL students will respond and strive to reach those expectations. When students gain pride in what they do, they take greater delight in learning and their self-esteem increases (Reed & Railsback, 2003). A principal and former teacher in an Idaho/Oregon border school, where 25% of the school’s students are students in the school’s ELL program, foresees increasing numbers of participants in the ELL program. She is very committed to improving programming and academic achievement of ELL students. In addition, she believes these kids may have difficulties in learning English, but they are certainly capable of learning what other children learn. She maintains if ELL students are held to the same level of standards as all students and teachers have high expectations for them, they will have high expectations of themselves (Reed & Railsback, 2003). I believe these motivational theories reinforce the old adage, ‘As a person believes, so shall he/she become.’ The positive expectations concept helps
support general education teachers in their classroom and enhances their instructional teaching strategies.

While pondering and evaluating ideas and concepts heard in various lectures and readings, I have concluded and believe that every person views the world through a cultural lens that was shaped by their own personal experiences. These life experiences can also be referred to as a filter that has evolved as a result of information both observed and learned. I believe these life experiences affect our opinions, our attitudes, and the way we deal with life’s occurrences. The proposed training will also focus on transforming teachers’ thinking and personal opinions about a student’s learning ability and the impact of their culture on their learning ability. This will, hopefully, produce a more productive learning process.

**Evaluation Questions**

The specific evaluation questions addressed in this project are:

1. To what extent is participation in a two-hour training on assessment and instructional strategies for ELL students associated with improvements in teacher knowledge about assessment and instructional strategies?

2. To what extent is participation in the training and the follow up interview associated with teachers’ use of instructional strategies included in the training?

**Methods**

**Participants and Setting**

The invitation to participate was emailed to all teachers and staff at two elementary schools in Alpine School District. At Orchard Elementary there were
anticipated 25 participants, actual 14 participants. At Vineyard Elementary there were anticipated 40 participants and there were 10 actual participants. There were 14 participants combined from both schools that completed all of the sections of the demographic survey, pre-test, and post-test portions of the project. Therefore only 14 of the 24 results were used to tabulate data. The breakdown of participants from both schools were seven general education teachers, with three special education teachers, two speech pathologists, and one administrator and one school psychologist. As an incentive for participating, teachers were told that there would be a drawing at the end of the project for gift cards from Staples, I-Tunes, Amazon.com, and a local restaurant.

Orchard Elementary school is located in an upper middle class neighborhood and the faculty has an average of 11 years of experience. These teachers are considered highly qualified according to the Utah State Office of Education. The school has a Spanish immersion program, and four of the teachers that participated teach the immersion classes. The average class size at Orchard Elementary is 31 students. Most teachers reported having only 1 ELL in his or her current class. Nine teachers completed the demographic survey, pre-test and post-test from Orchard Elementary. Of those, three teachers participated in one on one interviews.

Vineyard Elementary is considered a Title I school and a majority of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The teachers at Vineyard are all required to be ESL certified in the SIOP program. The faculty have an average 7 seven years of teaching experience. The average class size reported in the demographic survey is about 25 students and teachers reported 2 to 3 ESL students in their classes. Five teachers
completed the demographic survey, pre-test and post-test from Vineyard Elementary. Of those, three teachers participated in the one on one interviews.

**Procedures**

**Phase 1: demographic survey and pre-test.** After I received the agreements to participate, the URLs for the demographic survey and pre-test were e-mailed to participants one week prior to training. The demographic survey focused on participants’ level of education, general knowledge and attitudes about assessing and teaching ELL students, classroom demographics, and whether they were able to converse in and understand a language other than English. The pre-test evaluated the extent to which participants had specific knowledge about the content included in the training related to assessing and teaching ELL students.

The demographic survey, pre-test, and post-test were completed using a free online survey tool called eSurveysPro. The each tool for collecting data had separate links which participants were e-mailed. The link for each survey recorded the results as a total percentage and each participant’s individual response for each item on the demographic survey and pre and post-test.

**Phase 2: in-service training.** Teachers were then invited to attend the in-service training during a regular faculty meeting at their respective schools in May of 2013. The training was delivered via a power point presentation, and began with a thank you to the participants and introductory information about my creative project including my objectives for this training and the important abbreviations used throughout the training.

Next, I reviewed the rules and guidelines for school-based services for ELL students enacted by the State of Utah and how the guidelines vary by state and school.
district. This was followed by information on nation-wide, state, and local school district statistics reporting the percentage of ELL students in each of these areas and their comparison with native English speaking students. The cost of educating ELL students was also presented. A historical background of the laws regulating ELL students was then presented, from the 1968 Bilingual Education Act to the 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act.

Information regarding the acquisition of oral language skills and key concepts of acquisition of English was the next topic in the presentation. The training included information about the typical stages of language development by ELL as they progress. Concise information about the types of language, BICS and CALPs, and the development of communication is then presented.

The principles that teachers should use to help increase their students’ learning was then discussed as well as specific skills that teachers need to use. This was followed by a list of the different educational courses teachers may take to help improve their teaching skills and the research-based teaching strategies that are included in those courses. Participants were specifically encouraged to utilize team work in their school programs to improve the overall learning experience for the second language learners.

A variety of bilingual instructional models were then presented to those participating in the training. The ELL students that have had interruptions or breaks in their formal education (SIFE) need to have teachers be aware of additional programs or procedures to aid them in their schooling. Teachers must also be aware that there are many experiences and cultural influences that impact their students’ learning.

Information was presented that emphasized the importance of positive attitudes, positive
feedback, and high expectations of all teachers and staff involved in the education of culturally diverse students.

Information and statistics regarding the overrepresentation of ELL in Special Education classes compared to the percentage of native English language students was presented, including percentages of ELL with disabilities in different states around the nation. Ideas which can be integrated into the assessment procedures of ELL students to improve the accuracy of their evaluations was then presented as well as the issues or concerns that may lead to the overrepresentation of ELL in special education classes.

The final sections of the training listed beneficial websites that educators can access to provide additional information on this topic. There are two websites where teachers can find age-appropriate interactive games and activities to assist young children who are ELL. The training concluded with a review of the main skills, knowledge, and attitudes that teachers need to be effective with ELLs along with a list of references of materials and resources included in the training. In addition, each individual slide included a reference citation on the bottom that teachers can refer to if they wanted additional information on that particular topic.

At the end of the in-service training, which lasted for approximately 2 hours, I gave the URL for the post-test to the participants and reminded them that everyone who completed the post-test was entered into a drawing for the gift certificates.

**Phase 3: post-training data collection and analysis.** The post evaluation survey was available on line for a week and was used to measure improvements in participants’ knowledge about attitude and assessment and instruction strategies that are effective with ELLs. Participants were encouraged to submit the post-test within one week of the
training and were also encouraged to implement at least one of the instructional
techniques in their classrooms. An invitation to participate in a follow-up interview was
also emailed to all participants. Six teachers participated in the interviews. The
interviewees were asked if the training enhanced his or her current knowledge of teaching
strategies, what specific strategies have been utilized in the classroom, and if he or she
felt more comfortable to teach ELLs. The participants were informed they would be
included in up to three gift certificate drawings if they participated in the pre-training, the
actual training, and the post-training.

Measures

Demographic survey. The teacher demographic survey is included in Appendix
A. These questions were designed to gather information about the teacher’s background
including the number of years the individual has been teaching, the highest educational
degree received, the number of languages spoken, number of years working with ELLs,
the total number of students they currently teach, and if they ever had specific training to
work with ELLs. Next, is a section of questions about the demographics of their current
students, such as: the number of students where another language is spoken in the home,
the number of ELL students in their class, and the percentage of students from other
cultures. The next set of questions concern the teacher’s current teaching approach, such
as: do they ask parents for their preference regarding the language for their child’s
instruction, their belief regarding the teaching language for ELL students with
disabilities, their administrator’s policy for the instruction language used, the language
used for printed learning materials, if there are interpreters or assistants in their
classroom, what language they use to assess their ELL students, their level of satisfaction
with their instruction of ELLs, and their school’s policy regarding the language used to instruct their current ELL students.

**Pre-test and post-test.** Eighteen questions related to the content of the training were included in the pre-test and post-test. The test was designed to measure participants’ improvements in knowledge and attitudes knowledge in each participant. The pre-test was administered one week before the training and the post-test was administered one during the week after training. The Pre-test/Post-test measure is included in Appendix A.

**Interviews.** The interview questions are included in Appendix F. The interviews were conducted individually at the participants’ schools and were designed to collect a measure of social validation, as well as collecting information about instructional strategies the participants had tried or utilized in the teaching of ELL students.

**Results**

**Demographic Survey**

Most participants had a Bachelor’s degree with some additional credits and had an average of nine years of teaching experience. Most of the participants speak only English. And most participants had ELL students in their classrooms as well as children who were English speakers but were from diverse home cultures. Seven of the participants were general education teachers. Three of the participants were from Vineyard, and four were from Orchard Elementary. Three special education teachers with two from Vineyard and one from Orchard, two speech pathologists one from each school, and one administrator from Vineyard and one school psychologist from Orchard participated. Of the participants, only nine reported being trained to work with and teach ELLs. Most
participants use an English only approach to teaching, but two use Spanish immersion programs. Participants believe that students should be able to communicate with parents in primary language. Participants reported they do not ask parents about language preference of materials. More than half of the participants recorded that in an IEP meeting language instruction is not discussees for ELL students. Most have informal interpreters available, but do not assess the ELL in his or her primary language. Participants reported they are somewhat satisfied with instruction available for ELLs. The majority of the attitudes in the schools are to promote bi-lingual instruction. The pie charts illustrating the results for each question in the demographic survey are found in Appendix D. Numbers 7, 9, and 10 were not graphed because the data was collected from each school’s demographics rather than relying on staff knowledge.

Evaluation question 1. To answer the first evaluation question, responses on the pre-test and post-test items were analyzed to determine the extent to which participant’s knowledge about assessment and instructional procedures for ELLs improved after training. The pre- and post-test average score for each item are included in Appendix E. The greatest growth was 83% and it was on question three - Immigrants are responsible for 50% of population increase in the United States between 2000 and 2010. The least growth was tabulated on question two - In an education setting, who is the first person responsible to educate students as ELLs? I believe this was because the pre-test percentage was high at 96%, and initially, one person did not answer correctly. The post-test percentage was 92%, but again only one person did not answer correctly. Fewer participants answered the post-test questions than the pre-test question. Therefore, to obtain the most accurate results, numbers were converted to percentages.
Overall there was a significant increase in percentages from the pre-test to post-test which validates the effectiveness of the training.

Every participant that participated in the pre-test knew the abbreviation for Limited English Proficiency (LEP). All but one participant correctly identified the general education teacher as being responsible for the ELL’s primary instruction. Thirteen of 14 participants thought immigrants were responsible for only 50 percent of the US population growth. Eight of the 14 participants understood that state and local districts set aside funds to sponsor ESL remedial programs. Only 3 participants estimated the correct cost to educate an ELL student compared to peers. Four participants identified Utah as the 8th fastest growing limited English proficiency in the U.S. and 12 participants correctly identified California as the state with the highest ELL student population. Five participants knew that Title III in NCLB refers to accountability of ELL. All of the participants identified at least one teaching method to meet the needs of ELLs. 9 participants knew the stages of language development. Only 5 participants understood BICS and CALPs. The same five were able to identify the most effective teaching model. Every participant understood connecting with a student’s culture is important. Only 4 people identified 2nd grade as the grade where ELLs are most commonly referred to special education process.

On the post-test, all participants answered most questions correctly. The question regarding the cost to educate an ELL student compared to a non-ELL peer improved from 3 to 6 participants answering correctly. There was a small amount of improvement in the response to the question asking in what grade students are most commonly referred for ELL services. The greatest improvement was an 83% correct response on item three;
“Immigrants are responsible for 50% of population increase in the United States between 2000 and 2010”.

**Evaluation question 2.** There were six participants who participated in the oral interviews. Four interviews were conducted with faculty at Vineyard Elementary and two interviews were conducted with participants at Orchard Elementary. Each person expressed the usefulness of the training, and that it was easily applicable. Participant 1, a general education teacher from Vineyard, shared an experience where she allowed an ELL student to make a presentation to the class about his culture and indicated that it was very beneficial for the student.

Each of the six oral interviewees responded positively to question one regarding enhancement of knowledge of teaching strategies. Each of the six reported they were introduced to strategies they would be able to utilize in their classrooms. Each of the six participants reported they were more comfortable with their understanding of teaching strategies designed for ELLs. Question three requested feedback for improving the training. Four participants felt the training was appropriate and applicable. One general education teacher suggested minimizing the time spent presenting. The sixth participant recommended an all on-line format for the complete training and survey questions.

**Discussion**

The results and feedback from the participants in this training showed participants’ knowledge of working with ELL students improved after taking the training particularly the teaching strategies and vocabulary. Participants also improved in the area of effective teaching models for ELL students. There were a few facts that would need to
be clarified in future training. The fact that second grade is the most common grade ELL students are referred to special education was not emphasized enough.

The least growth was tabulated on question two - “In an education setting, who is the first person responsible to educate students as English Language Learners?” I believe this was because the pre-test percentage was high at 93%, and initially, one person did not answer correctly. The post-test percentage was 93%, but again only one person did not answer correctly.

The demographic survey showed 43% of the participants had a bachelor’s degree with no additional education. This reveals most of the teachers were level one, or within their first three years of teaching. I believe this reflects that this portion of the participants are seeking more training to help improve their teaching strategies. With over 54% of the participants indicating they have more than 30 students in their class and they also report they have more than 5 students in their classroom that are ELLs; this underscores the need for this training. It was interesting to notice that over 80% of the participants do not test their student/students in his or her primary language. This may be because of the limited recourses in other languages available at their school as indicated by the participants in another question on the survey.

The individuals who participated in the concluding personal interview questions responded with a yes/no style. Though the interviewees expanded on their yes answers, it would have been beneficial to have more open-ended questions in this section. However, the questions were posed this way because of the need to tabulate answers. Two of the interviewees shared personal experiences with ELL students to explain how they applied the strategies from the training. All of the participants interviewed expressed the opinion
they felt the training enhanced their knowledge and helped them understand there was a definite need for expanding their knowledge of teaching strategies when working with ELL students. One participant mentioned that making the power point training available on-line would be beneficial so he could access it at his convenience. I believe this would be a good idea to help increase the number of culturally responsive educators. This would also reduce the amount of time needed for the complete training and possibly making it more appealing to the master’s degree level and bachelor’s plus level participants. The calculation of responses of the surveys indicated the demographic survey showed there were fewer participants with these levels of education. With the feedback from the interviewees being so positive I do not believe I would change the content included in the training, other better explaining the areas with low post-test percentages.

Although most of the participants of this project are ESL certified, it is my recommendation that teachers may benefit from a yearly training specifically focused on teaching ELL students. The overall improvement in knowledge suggests that the training was effective with these fourteen participants. This correlated with a growth of each participant’s knowledge in working with ELL students in their classes. Ideally, it would have been helpful if all of the participants had completed the post-training survey questions so more responses could have been utilized in the final tabulation results. However, it is important to realize that they did participate in the power point training portion of this master’s project and they did have the opportunity to benefit from the training even if they did not complete the post-survey questions. Each of these individuals did give verbal positive feedback at the conclusion of their training.
Conclusion

This project provided training on ELL strategies to teachers, an understanding of the stages of language acquisition of ELL students, methods to improve their teaching skills, and to help teachers better understand when a special education referral is warranted. Each of these major topics resulted in improved knowledge and understanding of the fundamentals of these topics. The underlying conclusion indicates participation in the training resulted in improved knowledge and teachers may benefit from annual in-service training on serving ELL students.
References


Appendix A

Teacher Demographic Survey

This survey asks questions about the participant’s educational and teaching background. It also includes questions about the participant’s students and specific questions about English language learner students. This refers to students whose primary language spoken in the home is not English. Participants were instructed to use a false or pseudo name.

1. What is the highest educational degree you have received?
   - Bachelor’s degree
   - Bachelor’s degree plus additional credits
   - Master’s degree
   - Master’s degree plus additional credits
   - PhD

2. Do you speak a second language in addition to English?
   - No
   - I can speak 20-50 words in a second language
   - I can carry on a limited conversation in a second language
   - I am fluent in one or more languages other than English

3. How many years have you worked in education with students who come from homes where another language is spoken?
   - 0-3
   - 4-10
   - 11-15
   - 16-25
   - 26+
4. How many total students do you have in your current classroom?
   - LESS THAN 15
   - 15-20
   - 21-25
   - 26-30
   - MORE THAN 30

5. Do you have students in your current classroom who come from homes where another language is spoken?
   - YES
   - NO

6. How many English Language Learner (ELL) students do you have in your current classroom?

7. Please indicate the number of children from each ethnic or racial background in your classroom.
   - WHITE
   - HISPANIC
   - POLYNESIAN
   - BLACK
   - ASIAN
   - OTHER

8. What percentage of the students in your classroom are from other cultures? (i.e. 5 out of 31 students; ____ out of ____ students)

9. Do you know how many students are in special education in your school?
   - YES
   - NO
   - APPROXIMATELY

10. (Administrator, Special Education Teachers, Speech Pathologist, and/or School Psychologist ONLY)
    Of the students receiving special education services do you know the percent from each ethnic group?
    TOTAL NUMBER____
    WHITE
Hispanic
Polynesian
Black
Asian
Other

11. (Administrator, Special Education Teachers, Speech Pathologist, and/or School Psychologist ONLY)
How would you describe your position?

12. In your teacher education program, did you ever receive any training for working with English Language Learners?
- Yes
- No
- Some
- ELL certified

13. What approach do you use in teaching ELL the English language?
- Student’s primary language instruction
- Spanish Immersion program
- English language immersion: provide instructions in English and then the primary language
- English Only
- Some primary language support, as needed, (no more than 20% primary language instruction)

14. Which of the statements below describes your belief regarding the language of instruction for English Learner students who have disabilities
- I believe that a child needs to develop their primary language first before they will be able to acquire English as a second language.
- I believe that whatever language the child will most use in the future should be taught.
- I believe that students must be able to communicate with their parents and family members in their primary language.
- I believe students should learn to communicate in two languages
- I believe that if a student is a resident of the United States, she should learn the main societal language, English
15. Do you ask parents their preferences regarding the language for their child’s instruction,

- Yes, and I provide information in the language requested
- Yes but I send everything home in English
- No
- No, the school sends in English and Spanish so I don't worry

16. Does the administrator who attends your IEP meeting encourage discussion about what language should be used for receptive and expressive language instruction?

- Yes
- No

17. Which of the following are available to you? (check all that apply)

- Written materials in languages other than English
- My own second language abilities
- Bilingual related service professionals
- Bilingual instructional assistants
- Primary language materials for the parents (e.g., hand-outs, manuals, videos)
- Formally trained interpreters (available through service or district)
- Informal interpreters (e.g., family members, instructional assistant)
- Augmentative Communication Devices in language other than English

18. Do you assess your students in their primary language?

- Yes
- No

19. How satisfied are you with instruction for your students who are English Language Learners?

- Highly Satisfied
- Satisfied
- Somewhat Satisfied
- Somewhat Dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
20. Which best describes the attitude of your school regarding language decisions?

- Promotes English Only
- Promotes bi-lingual instruction
- There is no specific statement regarding this procedure

21. If you would like to submit your name to be entered into the drawing and reward box for completing the survey, please do so in space provided. (Optional)
Appendix B

Pre-Test and Post-Test Survey

The following are questions asked to participants to assess knowledge. The same questions are included in the pre-test and post-test to help measure growth in participant knowledge.

1. What does the abbreviation LEP stand for when referring to education?
   - Liaison Education Person
   - Limited English Proficiency
   - Learning English Program
   - Limited Education Problem

2. In an Education setting, who is the first person responsible to educate students identified as English Language Learners?
   - Parent
   - Special Education Teacher
   - General Education Teacher
   - ESL specialist

3. Immigrants are responsible for ______ of the US population increase between 2000-2010.
   - less than 20%
   - 50%
   - 60%
   - about 80%

4. Who is primarily responsible to fund ESL remedial programs?
   - District Offices and local schools
   - State Office of education and local Districts
   - Federal funds Only
5. According to the Government Accountability Office, how much more on average is it estimated to cost to educate an ELL student compared to peers?
   - 20% - 100%
   - less than 5%
   - 200% - 250%
   - 5% - 15%

6. Utah ranks ____ fastest growing limited English Proficiency population in the U.S.
   - 2nd
   - 5th
   - 8th
   - 14th

7. What state has the highest ELL student enrollment?
   - California
   - Texas
   - Utah
   - New Mexico

8. What Title in NCLB brings ELL students to the same standards and accountability as native English speaking students?
   - Title I
   - Title III
   - Title IX
   - Title XII

9. The average acquisition of academic English by ELL takes how many years?
   - 1-5 years
   - 5-7 years
10. What are some ways teachers may improve to better meet the needs of ELL students?
   - Educate themselves as teachers
   - Evaluate students’ performance
   - Be an agent of socialization
   - All of the above

11. Which of the following is NOT a stage of language development?
   - Silent/Receptive or Preproduction Stage
   - Master Production Stage
   - Speech Emergence Stage
   - Intermediate Language Proficiency Stage

12. What does BICS stand for?

13. What does CALP stand for?

14. What are some effective researched based teaching strategies to use with ELL students? (check all that apply)
   - Total Physical Response- use physical activities to increase learning
   - Worksheets or packets- students learn by working alone
   - Cooperative Learning- student participation in small-group activities
   - Computer based programs only-use only computer to teach students
   - Learning Experience Approach- use students’ words for text & reading
   - Dialogue Journals/Interactive journals- students write & teacher responds
15. Which is the most effective teaching model?
- Pull-Out Model- ELL pulled out of mainstream small portion of day class integrates L1 & L2 for academic skills development & literacy.
- Push-In Model- ELL in mainstream classes, team teaching, schedule flexibility, teachers trained in ESL methodologies, or bilingual assistants
- After-School & Saturday Programs- ELL take non-credit & credit classes after dismissal time.
- More flexibility & individualized instruction Meaningful, Standards-Based Learning- teachers adapt curriculum in mainstream classroom

16. How might a teacher use a child’s background and culture to improve learning?
- Positive cross-cultural attitudes involve goals to connect culture to academic content & integrate it into class work
- Discourage child to speak native language at school
- Use only teacher’s background and culture experiences to teach
- Encourage children to only work with other ELL students

17. ELL students are overrepresented in Special Education. In what grade is it most common to refer an ELL student for evaluation for special education eligibility?
- Pre-K
- 1st grade
- 2nd grade
- Usually after 3rd grade

18. Is there any specific information you would like to learn more about to help you better educate ELL students?
19. Please type a name you will use to identify yourself in this assessment. You will use the same identifiable name in the post assessment. May I recommend using your phone number (Jane DOE, Best TEACHER, Mary Poppins, 8811178, Tom Sawyer).

Thank you for your participation. You will be entered into a drawing to win a gift card.
Appendix C

Power Point Training

The power point slides are included in a separate section in a landscape format at the end of the Project Proposal and its conclusion. The slides are starting on page 54.
Appendix D

The following charts show the results of the Demographic Survey

1. What is the highest educational degree you have received?

- Bachelors degree: 43%
- Bachelors degree plus additional credits: 14%
- Masters degree: 7%
- Masters degree plus additional credits: 0%
- PhD: 0%

2. Do you speak a second language in addition to English?

- No: 0%
- I can speak 20-50 words in a second language: 9%
- I can carry on a limited conversation in a second language: 10%
- I am fluent in one or more languages other than English: 23%
- I am fluent in one or more languages other than English: 58%
3. How many years have you worked in education with students who come from homes where another language is spoken?

4. How many total students do you have in your current classroom?
5. Do you have students in your current classroom who come from homes where another language is spoken?

- 92% Yes
- 8% No

6. How many English Language Learner (ELL) students do you have in your current classroom?

- 55% 1
- 27% 2
- 9% 3
- 9% 4
- 0% 5 or more
- 0% 0

Question 7 data was collected from each school’s demographics.
8. What percentage of the students in your classroom are from other cultures?

Questions 9 data was collected from each school’s demographics.

Question 10 data was collected from each school’s demographics.

11. How would you describe your position?

Questions 9 data was collected from each school’s demographics.

Question 10 data was collected from each school’s demographics.
12. In your teacher education program, did you ever receive any training for working with English Language Learners

- Yes: 31%
- No: 15%
- Some: 31%
- ESL Certified: 23%

13. What approach do you use in teaching ELL the English language?

- Student’s primary language instruction: 8%
- English language immersion: provide instructions in English and then the primary language: 45%
- Spanish Immersion program: 37%
14. Which of the statements below describes your belief regarding the language of instruction for English Learner students who have disabilities

- I believe that a child needs to develop their primary language first before they will be able to acquire English as a second language.
- I believe that whatever language the child will most use in the future should be taught.
- I believe that students must be able to communicate with their parents and family members in their primary language.
- I believe students should learn to communicate in two languages.
- I believe that if a student is a resident of the United States, she should learn the main societal language, English.
15. Do you ask parents their preferences regarding the language for their child’s instruction?

- Yes, and I provide information in the language requested: 15%
- Yes but I send everything home in English: 31%
- No: 54%
- No, the school sends in English and Spanish so I don’t worry: 0%

16. Does the administrator who attends your IEP meeting encourage discussion about what language should be used for receptive and expressive language instruction?

- Yes: 54%
- No: 46%
17. Which of the following are available to you? (check all that apply)

- Written materials in languages other than English
- My own second language abilities
- Bilingual related service professionals
- Bilingual instructional assistants
- Primary language materials for the parents (e.g., handouts, manuals, videos)
- Formally trained interpreters (available through service or district)
- Informal interpreters (e.g., family members, instructional assistant)
- Augmentative Communication Devices in language other than English
18. Do you assess your students in their primary language?

- Yes: 15%
- No: 85%

19. How satisfied are you with instruction for your students who are English Language Learners?

- Highly Satisfied: 61%
- Satisfied: 31%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 8%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 0%
- Dissatisfied: 0%
20. Which best describes the attitude of your school regarding language decisions?

- Promotes English Only: 23%
- Promotes bi-lingual instruction: 54%
- There is no specific statement regarding this procedure: 23%
Appendix E

Pre-test and Post-test Accuracy in Percentages

The following is a chart of the pre and post assessment based on the percentage answered correctly.

Please note question 2 had only one person mark the incorrect answer, but because fewer participants answered the post-test the percentage is greater.

![Assessment Pre and Post](chart.png)
Appendix F

One on One Oral Interview Questions

Please discuss any detailed feedback on the effectiveness of the power point.

Do you have any suggestions for improvement of the power point presentation?

1. Did it help enhance your knowledge of teaching strategies that have proven effective for teaching English Language Learners in the elementary grades?

2. Has this information introduced you to strategies that you will be able to utilize in your classroom?

3. What modifications would you recommend for the power point? What modifications would you recommend for the evaluation surveys?

4. Do you feel more comfortable with your improved understanding of teaching strategies designed for ELL students?