Instructing All Students as Language Learners

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Abstract

Students who come into a school setting speaking a foreign language are often viewed as a challenge for teachers. These children have many difficulties with learning a new language and need to be properly assessed to determine their knowledge of English and their native language, which in this case is Spanish. According to these results, they need to be placed into an appropriate environment to use the skills which they have to the fullest extent possible. Instead of simply trying to create fluent English speakers, English Language Learners (ELLs) should be taught the grammatical and syntactic aspects of their native language which they may not learn at home. Many different types of instruction are available for ELLs; therefore, states need to determine the most effective school system for their learners. Within these school systems, ELLs need to be educated using both conversational and instructional techniques. Instead of simply viewing ELLs as a challenge, teachers need to recognize that conversational instruction can help both Spanish and English students learn each other's language. As ELLs are being educated, it is important to continue to observe these students to ensure that the instructional practices used are working well.

Instructing All Students as Language Learners

English language learners bring with them a new set of challenges for the faculty of the school which they are in; however, it is time for teachers to realize that these students are also helpful in other student's learning. English Language Learners (ELLs) are any students who are more proficient in their native language than in English. According to Andrea Honigsfeld, in 2000 there were 21.3 million limited English proficient individuals in the United States. She uses this number to project that by 2030 about 40% of students in the United States will have a different heritage language than English (2010). With this monumental number in mind, school systems need to determine a course of action for properly educating ELLs. These students need to be assessed upon entering school in order to determine what level they are at, and then they need to be placed in an appropriate class setting. ELLs face many difficulties as they try to become fluent in a new language and use it to learn in an academic setting. Besides learning all new vocabulary and new pronunciations for letters of the alphabet, they also have to learn many grammatical differences between the two languages.

There are many different types of programs which ELLs can be placed in to ease this learning process; but it is important that those whose native language is Spanish are placed in a setting which helps them develop their English skills and continues to build their Spanish skills. If this is done correctly, using a combination of conversational and instructional learning, ELLs can actually be a benefit to teachers who are trying to teach English speakers Spanish. Throughout their schooling it is important to evaluate ELLs to

determine the amount of information they are retaining and to modify their education as needed.

When students come into a school, the school needs to determine their level of competency both in English and in their native language. A number of different types of students come into school systems: heritage learners, L2 learners and English speakers (Potowski, Jegerski & Morgan-Short, 2009). The initial assessment which takes place in schools for these students is varied. Over time, ELL initial assessment has become more standardized due to more laws and regulations issued by the government, but some schools still have no reliable testing vehicles (O'Malley & Pierce, 1994). Some states set guidelines for schools to follow, and in these states the schools usually have guidebooks to test the students equally. Other states have no guidelines; a combination of assessment strategies occurs in their schools (Patton, 2006). After this initial assessment, the students need to be placed in some type of learning community.

Understanding Spanish English Language Learners

ELLs will struggle in different areas depending on the type of environment they were raised in. Some students will have had experience speaking in both languages, some will have experience with only slang in both languages, and many students will have experience in only one language. Regardless of their backgrounds, all ELLs struggle in certain areas. For example, when Hispanics try to learn English, they have to become accustomed to a much different sentence structure than Spanish requires. Many grammatical differences exist between the two languages: the placement of adjectives; the placement of direct and indirect object pronouns; the gender of nouns; the agreement

of adjectives with the nouns they modify; and in many cases, the inversion of subjects

and verbs in interrogative sentences (English Language Guide, 2009). Grammatical

differences are something that Spanish speakers continue to struggle with long into their

studies. Teachers of ELLs need to find specific techniques to evaluate students' abilities

and help them practice and master these new structures.

Grammatical Difficulties

The placement of adjectives is often quite different. In English there are

attributive adjectives and predicative adjectives. Attributive adjectives go before the noun

they describe; predicative adjectives are not in the noun phrase that includes the noun

they modify, but usually follow a linking verb (English Language Guide, 2009). For

example, in the phrase, *the red apple was ripe*, *red* would be an attributive adjective and

ripe would be a predicative adjective. However, in Spanish the order of the adjectives is

different. First, attributive adjectives usually go after the nouns they describe instead of

before them. So, if the previous phrase was translated to Spanish it would be: *la manzana*

roja estaba madura, which says, *the apple red was ripe* (Spanish Programs, 2009).

In Spanish, if you place the adjective before the noun, it can totally change the

meaning of the adjective. For example, *viejo amigo*, means an old friend from long ago;

where, *amigo viejo*, means a friend who is very old in age (Spanish Programs, 2009).

Predicative adjectives can be organized several different ways in Spanish. They can be

organized the same way they are in English: *la chica es bonita* / *the girl is pretty*. But

Spanish sentence structure is much more relaxed than English, so this could also be

phrased, *es bonita la chica*, literally; *she is pretty the girl*, generally inferring that the

speaker has come to the conclusion that the girl is pretty (Lynch, 2009). Additionally, this could be phrased, *bonita es la chica*, for, *pretty is the girl* (Lynch, 2009). Each of these three ways is considered grammatically correct for Spanish speakers. However, if an ELL were to translate them all directly to English, some of the sentences would not make sense. This is one rule which ELLs have to remember as they are switching their thoughts from Spanish to English.

Using direct object pronouns is different in Spanish and English as well. A direct object is a noun or pronoun which answers the question "*whom?*" or "*what?*", that the verb implies (English Language Guide, 2009). In English, the direct object comes after the verb, in the predicate of the sentence. For example, one could say, *you want the dog*; with a direct object pronoun, *you want it*. However, in Spanish the direct object pronoun is placed before the conjugated verb, which incidentally states both the subject and the verb. So the phrase, *you want it*, in Spanish becomes, *lo quieres*, which actually says, *it you want*. If the ELL does not remember to place the neuter direct object pronoun "it" after the verb, it will be obvious he is not fluent in English.

Using indirect object pronouns presents a similar problem for Spanish speakers. An indirect object is a noun or pronoun which answers the question "*for whom*" or "*for what*" the action of the verb implies (English Language Guide, 2009). In English sentences, the indirect object usually comes after the verb, and after the direct object. So, if Jerry Falwell was talking, he might say: "*We are building a new football stadium for the students.*" In this case, *the students* is the indirect object which comes after the verb and after the direct object (football stadium). When using an indirect object pronoun in

English, it will still be in the same position, s*he did it for me*. But in Spanish this would

be, *ella me lo hizo*, or *she me it did*. One would also say: *me lo hizo ella,* or *me it she did,*

but more about this structure later. Remembering to place indirect object pronouns and

direct object pronouns after the verb in English is important for ELLs.

Sentence Structure Difficulties

The Spanish construction of the basic sentence can also create problems because

of how flexible Spanish is when compared to English. In English, there is really only one

way to form a sentence in terms of subject and verb. English has the basic construction of

subject + verb +rest of sentence. The sentence can still be changed into any of the seven

types of sentences, but they all have this same basic construction. They differ mostly in

the *rest of sentence* portion. However, an Hispanic would structure a sentence in four

different ways (Spanish World, 2009). First, the sentence could be structured in the same

manner as English, with the *subject* + **verb** + <u>rest of sentence</u> format, as in *Juan* **corre** <u>en</u>

<u>el parque</u>: which says Juan runs in the park. The second option for Spanish is: the **verb** +

subject + <u>rest of sentence,</u> such as **corre** *Juan* <u>en el parque</u>. The third option is: the <u>rest of</u>

<u>sentence</u> + **verb** + *subject,* as in <u>en el parque</u> **corre** *Juan.* The final structure is the **verb** +

<u>rest of sentence</u> + *subject,* as in **corre** <u>en el parque</u> *Juan* (Spanish World, 2009, para 5).

All of these constructions are commonly used in Spanish, but only the first construction

would be acceptable if translated word-for-word into English. These grammatical

differences will be harder for some ELLs than for others, depending on their past

experience in English.

English Language Learners have to deal with a whole new set of rules when they begin using English. They have to learn to change the word order of adjectives, direct objects, indirect objects, and subject-verb placement. But these students can be helped in many different ways. If teachers take the time to assess students to see what they know when they enter a classroom, they can really help them move ahead quickly. Students will do especially well if they are in a Dual-Immersion program where teachers combine English and Spanish interaction and instruction. This instruction can be and should be done through explicit instruction and authentic interaction with the language. If teachers can do of these things with their students, English Language Learners will be able to overcome many of the hardships of learning English grammar.

The Importance of Assessing English Language Learners

When a teacher begins to work with a new English Language Learner it is important to determine where the student is at in his acquisition of the new language. Since some students may experience more problems than others with the grammatical aspects of the language, it is crucial to find out what the student is struggling with before instruction begins. A teacher can assess an English Language Learner in several ways. In the article "Assessing English-Language Learners in Mainstream Classrooms", Lenski, Ehlers-Zavala, Daniel, and Xiaoqin (2006) discuss having the students complete anything from anecdotal records, checklists, and portfolios, to less traditional forms of assessment such as: journaling, reading responses, and conferring. Anecdotal records would be helpful to determine if pronunciation, fluency, and vocabulary were developing well, but the other methods would probably be more helpful in dealing with grammatical

proficiency. Using reading responses would be a helpful tool because this would give the student the opportunity to repeat what had happened in a story. Students will have heard how the sentences are supposed to be structured in the story, so it should not be difficult for them to repeat what they have heard. So this is still a good form of assessment. If the teacher were to use journaling and conferring, this would force students to compose sentences on their own. Students would be either writing or speaking about events which occurred in their own day, or things which they want to discuss. This will provide them with a more relaxed way to communicate; however, students must still come up with their own ideas. Although all of these methods are helpful in assessing English Language Learners, journaling and conferring are probably the most effective means of assessing how well students understand sentence structure.

One specific way in which ELLs are assessed is the Student Oral Language Observation Matrix (SOLOM). This test is a less formal variety of testing based on observation (Minnesota Modified, 2003). A testing based on observation allows the student to feel at ease and perform to the best of their ability which is a benefit of the SOLOM. Another benefit is that this assessment is required to be administered by a licensed person which decreases the chances that the students will be misdiagnosed (Minnesota Modified, 2003). Though it may seem an inconvenience to require a licensed person to administer and grade the testing, the results which come from the testing will be much more accurate. The SOLOM is an assessment of both listening and speaking skills; specifically it covers academic and social comprehension, fluency, vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar (Minnesota Modified, 2003). This wide variety of topics

allows the student to show their strengths as well as their weaknesses so they can be best assisted in their learning. This test involved the examiner asking the client a series of questions and grading their responses for all of the areas mentioned above. The student is graded on a scale of one to five, with one being very poor in English, and five being close to fluent (Minnesota Modified, 2003). This simple assessment is just one example of how ELLs can be evaluated in a fair manner in order to determine their knowledge.

However, general principles apply to all assessing of ELLs. When assessing ELLs, educators need to look for patterns and determine which methods of instruction are working and which need to be modified. For example, one area in which ELLs are evaluated is grammar and conversational ability. Many educators are now saying that grammar acquisition may be something which comes with age, and that grammar can be taught only to a certain point in younger children (Montrul, Foote, & Perpiñán, 2008). Because of the learning which takes place at different points in time, it is important to continue evaluation throughout the student's schooling.

Another component is how well students perform on the ELL tests taken prior to graduation. Current studies show that students have a low passing rate the first time they take this test (Rivera, & Vincent, 1997). This implies that changes need to be made to the language instruction system. Some changes have already been mandated by law: such as the enhanced regulations of the Quayle Amendment (*Should Congress*, 1987). However, each school needs to accept responsibility for the education of its own students, instead of leaving the decisions to the government. Assessment should be of paramount importance.

Current Problem

Simply assessing the students is not enough. Students need to be assessed by trained proctors who administer tests which will examine as many aspects of the student's learning as possible. The student's phonemic development is difficult to gauge and understand, but it is important in order to determine how the student is doing. Based on a study by Fabiano-Smith and J.A. Barlow (2010), students need to be evaluated in several different manners by an administrator who is bilingual or familiar with how to collaborate with an expert in the other language in order to obtain accurate test results about the student's phonemic ability. The type of testing and the test administrator are important because of the complex way the brain works when learning two languages at one time. The time that is required for students to achieve normal phonemic understanding is different when they learn two languages simultaneously; instructors need to be aware of this process when they are testing.

Speech therapists will do the best testing possible with each student, but they can only use what they are given to work with. Usually, speech-language pathologists perform "best-practice methods of diagnosis and intervention in bilingual populations" based on how bilingual students do on tests based on phonological structures; but many don't know how the student's second language plays into testing (Fabiano-Smith & Barlow, 2010, p. 13). Because schools today rely heavily on diagnosing students with disabilities, if the correct testing does not take place, ELL's could be diagnosed with disabilities when in fact they are simply in a different area of learning. Misdiagnosis could cause students to have decreased self-esteem and many other problems. According

to Gildersleeve-Neumann, Kester, Davis, and Pena (2008), "10% to 15% of monolingual preschooler children exhibit speech sound disorders" (p. 314). Testing bilingual students for problems is even more difficult for speech-language pathologists because they do not know whether the students should be compared to monolingual students or if there should be other standards for bilingual students. ELLs need to be accurately tested so that those with problems can be helped and not ignored. Those who do not have problems will be able to continue learning at a normal pace and instead of being placed into modified programs that will be detrimental to their progress.

Basis for Testing

In order to test bilingual students accurately it is important to understand how the brain works when learning two languages. When learning Spanish and English at the same time, the student's brain is forming two groups of phonological structures which create all the words they will use in these two languages. Students will learn these phonological structures piece by piece, either through direct instruction, of through hearing other people talk. Sometimes these phonological structures are divided into marked sounds, which are more complex, and unmarked sounds, which are less complex (Fabiano-Smith & Barlow, 2010). Another way of looking at the phonological structures is to divide them into vowels and consonants (Gildersleeve-Neumann, et. al, 2008). Depending on the way these structures are divided, the student can be assessed in different ways.

The key to successful testing lies in understanding how the development of phonological structures occurs with both monolingual and bilingual students. The

phonological structures may be divided up differently based on what is being tested. In tests by Fabiano-Smith & Barlow (2010), phonological structures were broken up into stops, nasals, glides, fricatives, and certain vowel and consonant sounds. This allowed the researchers to rank the children by the number of skills they were able to master, and required them to look at many different areas of phonology. The way phonological structures are divided has a significant impact on how the students do on the testing. The study which Gildersleeve-Neumann et. al (2008) completed divided these structures into only vowel and consonant sounds. Dividing the structures into vowels and consonants provides an easy way to evaluate the students quickly, but including other skills in the test gives a more comprehensive picture of how the student is doing.

Differences in Results

It may appear that either of these tests would satisfactorily evaluate students and show similar results, but both studies showed different outcomes. The study which Gildersleeve-Neumann et. al (2008) completed included thirty-three children: ten were English monolingual students, twenty were bilingual students who had more English at home than Spanish, and three were bilingual students who had an equal amount of English and Spanish spoken at home. These participants were an excellent selection because it allowed the researchers to compare monolingual students against bilingual students and test them both with the same material. These children were given a picture prompt and asked to name the picture. They were then evaluated on the pronunciation of the vowels and consonants contained in their response (Gildersleeve-Neumann, et. al, 2008). Having the students name a picture provided a focus on speech, rather than on

development as a whole and did not include reading progress. The results of this study

are similar to those of previous studies and expectancies of ELLs. Figure 1 below shows

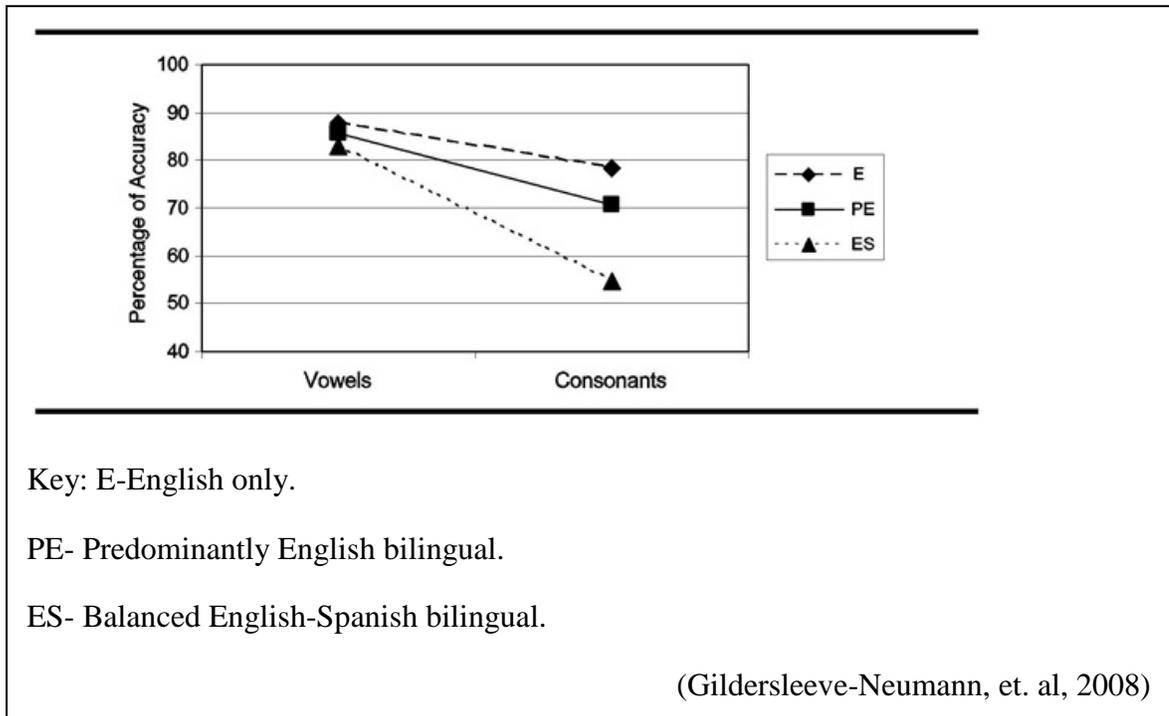the results of the three groups of students in their vowels and consonants.

Key: E-English only.

PE- Predominantly English bilingual.

ES- Balanced English-Spanish bilingual.

(Gildersleeve-Neumann, et. al, 2008)

Figure 1. Comparison of overall percentage of vowels correct and percentage of
consonants correct by language group.

This figure illustrates that bilingual students are not as advanced as students who are

monolingual nor as students who have had more experience with English than with

Spanish at home. We conclude from this information that bilingual students are unable to

learn both phonological structures at the same rate at which monolingual students are

able to learn their phonological structures.

However, this conclusion is based only on the results of one type of testing. When

Fabiano-Smith and Barlow (2010) tested students, they divided the phonological

structures into classes of sounds, rather than individual sounds. This testing was

administered to twenty four students: eight monolingual Spanish speakers, eight

monolingual English speakers, and eight bilingual students providing a more equitable

selection. The selection of students in this study provides information that can be applied

in English schools as well as Spanish schools in order to evaluate bilingual students. This

study also used single word samples to evaluate the students and included a three-judge

panel to evaluate the student's responses (2010). A single word inventory is commonly

used to evaluate children, but it is the method of grading the responses which makes this

research important. Students were evaluated on several aspects of their pronunciation and

then graded as to speech proficiency, with A being the lowest and E being the most

advanced. The results of this research revealed that many bilingual students tested at the

same level as monolingual students in proficiency (2010). According to Fabiano-Smith

and Barlow (2010), "all monolingual English speaking children exhibited inventories at

Level E and all monolingual Spanish speaking children exhibited inventories at either

Levels D or E. Seven out of the eight bilingual children exhibited phonetic inventories at

the highest levels of complexity, Levels D or E in both languages" (p. 92). The leveling

system of evaluation allowed students to display their knowledge in all areas of speech

rather than just two, which indicates a more complete assessment.

Using the Results

In addition to revealing a more accurate review of the student's current

capabilities, evaluation in several areas allows researchers to observe how students are

able to transfer knowledge between the two languages. In the research completed by

Fabiano-Smith and Barlow (2010), a tabulation indicated which of the speech

components were mastered in each language. This revealed that not all speech

components are automatically transferred into the second language. It is easy to assume

that if the student has mastered a certain phonological sound in one language that it

would be perfect in the second language also, and many teachers will try to instruct

bilingual students with this mindset. However, according to the research conducted by

Fabiano-Smith and Barlow (2010), several speech sounds which students had mastered in

one language were not exhibited properly in the second language. This indicates that

transfer between the languages is not automatic. When teachers are instructing bilingual

students, they need to remember that transfer is not automatic and that they should

provide direct instruction in both languages in the field they are studying.

   This research shows the importance of using a well-developed type of testing with

an appropriate proctor. If students are evaluated with a well-made test by a proctor who is

competent, they may receive the best education possible. After determining what level

students are at in English and Spanish, the teacher can instruct them based on their needs

in each language and help them move forward in both languages. Once a teacher

understands how students' brains work, many advances can be made in their education.

   The current assessment of ELLs reveals that this part of the students' education

field is lacking. ELLs going through school need to undergo continuous assessment to

ensure that the method of teaching used is working. Many different ELL assessment kits

are available which may be administered several times during the year (Toohey, 2007).

One assessment tests the reading levels of ELLs in both Spanish and English over time,

and uses the results to indicate how well they will perform in the future, and whether they are advancing normally (De Ramírez & Shapiro, 2007).

One should also examine the students' writing levels against their reading levels because writing skills are different from reading skills. The problem of conversational language acquisition versus written language acquisition is something that schools are emphasizing lately. This includes testing all the way up to graduation for ELLs (Carlo, August, McLaughlin, Snow, Dressler, Lippman, 2004). When comparing the different types of classes, one area that is examined is how ELLs are progressing in main-stream classes compared to other programs (Lenski et. al, 2006). It is important to follow some students through several grades to ensure the goals of these programs are being attained (Ong, Irby, Lara-Alecio & Mathes, 2008). All of these results are important when evaluating the ELL program. If ELLs were evaluated accurately when they entered school, and placed in optimal classrooms, their education would be better rounded, and assessments would reflect that change (Estrada, Gómez, & Ruiz-Escalante, 2009). ELLs need to be viewed both as a teaching tool, and as students. If these students were placed in optimal classrooms with English and Spanish students, English and Spanish instruction, and conversational as well as lecture instruction, the assessments of ELLs at graduation would improve.

Types of Schools for English Language Learners

The arrangement of the class is a very important part of instruction for ELLs. Teachers want to be able to control the amount of exposure a student gets to a specific language. This is difficult to do because all students receive different conversational

practice at home depending upon whether they live in a Spanish or English speaking

community. Because there are heritage students, L2 students, and students from English

speaking homes, some students receive more reinforcement in the target language at

home. The arrangement of classes varies greatly as some systems place Spanish-speaking

students in a class with English speakers and give them English instruction. Dual-

Immersion systems place Spanish speakers and English speakers together with the goal of

having both groups learn English and Spanish (Chavez, 2007). Other systems place all

students who tested very low in Spanish in a class offering mainly Spanish instruction

and only small amounts of English instruction. Each teacher sets up his classroom

differently. Sometimes the teacher uses only English and has a Spanish aid present.

Sometimes English and Spanish teachers partner and sometimes the children switch

between English and Spanish speaking teachers (*Partnering*, 2007). These methods all

combine to provide different classroom environments.

Many different types of learning communities are in use at present, each with

different purposes and methods. Some try to teach the student to be fluent in English;

others want to continue the student's education in his native language, and some want to

help English speaking students learn Spanish (Zehr, 2003). Two instructional methods

currently used are Dual-Immersion and Systematic and Engaging Early Literacy

Instruction (SEEL) (Culatta, Reese & Setzer, 2006). Both employ: hands on activities,

implicit instruction, explicit instruction, gestures, community interaction, partner

teaching, and immersion (Church, Ayman-Nolley &Mahootian, 2004). Some methods are

more useful in teaching a language than others, due to the way people learn languages

(Cañado, 2006). Because people have to learn languages through speaking, listening, writing, and reading, it is important to determine how each of these methods should be used.

Structured English Immersion Program

The type of ELL program that a school decides to implement is based on what the school's goal is for the ELLs. The curriculum that schools use is determined by the population in that area, especially the parents. Often parents who come from other countries want their children to learn English as quickly as possible and to forget their native language entirely. This sways the program of study offered by a school. According to Andrea Honigsfeld (2009), many states, such as California and Arizona, are committed to teaching their students to speak only English "as rapidly and effectively as possible" (p. 168). Arizona has gone as far as setting a time limit on its students; state legislature requires that students learn English for one year, and then be transferred into an English-only classroom (Honigsfeld, 2009). This demand puts pressure on the students and changes the way in which material is taught. Because of the goal to switch to all English, California, Arizona and some other states use a Structured English Immersion program. Honigsfeld explains that a Structured English Immersion program requires the subject matter to be presented to the ELLs entirely in English. The instructor is fluent in Spanish so the students can ask questions in Spanish if necessary, but the instructor will not speak Spanish to the students unless he is teaching Spanish (Honigsfeld, 2010). This approach completely immerses the students in English and forces them to understand the language.

The program appears efficient because the students would have to learn the language. However, many students may be overwhelmed by the complete transition into a language they do not understand. According to Honigsfeld (2010), students in the English-only program have difficulty with reading as well as math, and this type of teaching leads to the highest number of dropouts. The English-only program leaves the students facing a new social situation at school, a different language, and academic instruction in this language. This program sounds like it would work well, but many students are overwhelmed by the new language and seem to slip through the cracks to disaster.

English as a Second Language Program

On the other hand, some models are based on the student's current level of fluency, and depart from there. An example of this would be to place students in a regular English classroom and give them additional English as a Second Language help. Honigsfeld (2010) addressed this type of instruction in her article, pointing out that students receive English as a Second Language instruction based on how well they are testing in English. This is a much more reasonable goal for states to have. Not all students learn at the same rate due to their background, the teacher, and many other factors. Therefore, it is unreasonable to set a period of time, and declare that students are required to move on to a new level by this point. In the English as a Second Language program, students can be pulled out of class for extra time with a specialist, or the specialist may come into the class to work with them depending on class room availability (Honigsfeld, 2010). This allows the program to be adapted to many different school setups while still

providing good curriculum. It also allows students to move into the language at a rate

they are comfortable with so that they will not be overwhelmed and quit.

Bilingual Education

Another option is to incorporate instruction in Spanish, rather than to simply

instruct all subjects in English, or offer help with the English classes. This method is

called "bilingual education" and may be divided into transitional and developmental

Education (Honigsfeld, 2010, p. 169). This type of instruction can be controversial

because students are not being pushed as hard in English; however, the goal which the

school has for the students will determine the type of program which they need.

Honigsfeld (2010) explains that the transitional bilingual approach is meant to wean

children from Spanish and make them English-only learners. She adds that the

developmental or maintenance bilingual approach aims to produce students who are

fluent in both Spanish and English. To have students who already speak one language

well, and to not continue their education in that language is a waste of their natural

abilities. If students are taught in both languages, they learn that both of these are equally

important in their lives, whereas at home Spanish might be discouraged as a language

that was a thing of the past for their family. This allows the students to continue to feel

comfortable as they learn and to refine their skills in their native language.

Dual Language Education

In addition to bilingual education, other types of programs also encourage

retaining one's native language, such as the dual language program. In short, the dual

language program is an environment in which Spanish and English-speaking students

come together to learn from each other and their professors about both languages. In her

article Honigsfeld (2010) states that dual language programs can be minority language

dominant programs in which ninety percent of the instruction is provided in the native

language, or balanced programs, in which the material is taught in equal amounts of each

language. Minority language dominant programs are more complicated because they

divide the students into two groups based on their dominant language and instruct them

accordingly. Balanced programs allow the students to be together inside the classroom

and outside the classroom for the entire day. The dual language program is helpful

because it allows students to learn the language at an instructional level as well as a

conversational level with their peers. This also provides a chance for cultures to mingle

and for students to see the similarities and differences in culture. Having a peer group

which includes both languages reinforces the importance of cultural unity and equality

throughout life.

Benefits of the Different Programs

It is important to evaluate these different varieties of programs and see which one

would be the most effective in instructing ELLs. As stated earlier, the monolingual

english instruction for ELLs has been shown to cause lower scores and more dropouts.

As Honigsfeld (2010) indicated in her studies, dual immersion and bilingual education

programs were the most successful programs. She went on to explain that only these

programs produced students who were above average in testing in their native language,

English, and other subjects. Furthermore, these students had the lowest number of

dropouts, and continued to have high scores throughout their schooling (Honigsfeld,

2010). Clearly, it is important for students to be introduced to and instructed in a new language gradually. If school systems continue to thrust students into overwhelming situations, ELLs will be left behind. It is also interesting to note the importance of having native speakers of the language to communicate with while learning new content. Dual immersion provides many benefits compared to other programs, and needs to be used more frequently.

Type of Instruction Within Each Classroom

Once the teacher assesses where the ELLs are at in their reading and writing, he is able to teach them better sentence structure. This is not something which is learned simply by diagramming sentences on the board or drilling the different parts of speech. When learning Spanish, English language learners need to develop knowledge of both conversational and academic language. Both of these abilities are addressed during the student's time in school, but it is the conversational abilities that help most with the issue of sentence structure. One man who has made immensely important discoveries for bilingual students is Dr. James Patrick Cummins. Dr. Cummins is a professor at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education and has written several great pieces on the language development of bilingual students: specifically using his terms Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) (Dr. Cummins', 2003). The article "Let's Make Dual-Language the Norm" discusses Dr. Cummins' ideas in further detail. The article explains that conversational knowledge is known as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) deals with more specific content

vocabulary and knowledge (Estrada, Gómez, and Ruiz-Escalante, 2009). Basic

Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) are the skills a student would need in order

to communicate effectively with a speaker of another language. This ability is usually

developed in about two to three years and is enough to allow students to communicate in

their new language (Estrada, Gómez, and Ruiz-Escalante, 2009). This allows them to

have normal conversations, but probably not understand much in an academic setting.

Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) is much more involved. Here,

students understand academic vocabulary specific to a subject enough that they are able

to understand instruction in this subject. This usually takes about seven years to acquire

(Estrada, Gómez, and Ruiz-Escalante, 2009). Both BICS and CALP are important for

students to learn, but students need to master basic communication skills before they can

begin studying the intricacies of content vocabulary.

Dealing with the idea of BICS and CALP makes teachers think about how

students should be taught a second language. Students could either be lectured constantly,

which would allow no time for practice and would create awkward speakers, or students

could learn Spanish through conversation only, which would mean they would probably

never have a firm basis and will learn only slang and shortened versions of the language.

According to the article "Let's make Dual-Language the norm", English Language

Learners need to be placed in an environment where they are surrounded by fluent

English and Spanish speakers, and receive instruction in both English and Spanish

(Estrada, Gómez, and Ruiz-Escalante, 2009). This method of teaching would be very

helpful for students who are having trouble with correct sentence structure. It would

allow them instruction time in English and Spanish and to hear and understand how correct sentences are formed. It would also allow them ample time to practice until they understand how to appropriately use both languages. Dual-Immersion is an excellent teaching technique well-suited to this task.

No matter what setting the English Language Learners are in, whether Dual-Immersion or not, teachers need to think of techniques to use in order to help these learners with grammatical issues. First of all, learners need to receive explicit instruction dealing with grammar principles. Janice Christy (2005), of the Louisa County High school English Department in Virginia, recommends that the principles of syntax be taught to English Language Learners in their primary language. It is commonly accepted by teachers that English Language Learners will be able to transfer knowledge taught in their primary language to the second language once they understand the material. Accordingly, teachers could teach the parts and functions of speech in Spanish and then explain how those parts work in the English language. Christy (2005) also recommends that teachers use online resources so that students can do grammar activities online where they can get instant feedback on their work. This is becoming an easier resource to use all the time as more children become familiar with how to use computers and more schools invest in computers for students to use. This explicit instruction and practice with specific parts and functions of speech will be very helpful for English Language Learners.

Students also need to experience language in authentic settings; they need more than explicit instruction and grammatical fill-in-the-blank practice. For English Language Learners, the more learning experiences they receive in real-life settings, the better they

will work with the information. Christy (2005) has several good ideas as to how to integrate authentic literature into Language Education of grammar. First, she recommends that students be taught Language Arts with a combination of Spanish and English. For example, if the class is reading a story students should read it first in their native language and then again in English (Christy, 2005). This will enable them to understand what is going on in the story, and they will be able to figure out what more words mean. Another similar suggestion is that the teacher make newspapers available for the students in the classroom so that they will always have access to authentic English writing (2005). This would be helpful because students would see English sentence structure as it really works and begin to model it. They will also see how different types of Spanish sentences translate into English. With a combination of these teaching techniques, children will receive a clearer understanding of English grammar.

Generally the education students receive has an emphasis on either: conversational learning, which focuses on student interaction, or on lecture-learning, which focuses more on grammar and the rules of the language. There needs to be a good balance between the two types of instruction. Students who receive only lecture-like instruction from the teacher have trouble actually interacting with other people in the language they are trying to learn. They do not become effective fluent speakers. In the assessment of conversational skills, ELLs often have trouble determining when to use formal versus informal phrases depending on whom they are speaking with (Mathes, Pollard-Durodola, Cárdenas-Hagan, Linan-Thompson, Vaughn, 2007). However, students who are educated in only conversational settings have trouble passing the ELL

testing at graduation (Carlo et al., 2004). On tests before graduation and during

schooling, students are tested on their ability in grammar skills such as: noun gender and

adjectival agreement with subjects, and subjunctive conjugation. In the optimal situation,

students would be placed in a setting with equal amounts of English and Spanish and

teaching would take place in both Spanish and English, conversationally and

instructionally. This would create fluent speakers who have a firm foundation in the

grammar and idiomatic structure of two languages. Many schools are also placing an

emphasis on community interaction as a conversational tool, for this encourages students

to interact in the culture of the new language (Russell, 2007). One tremendous problem

with teachers who work in dual-language class rooms is their lack of training to teach

this. In most states: Massachutes, Vinginia, and many more, teacher are only required to

pass one test on Spanish Content Knowledge in order to teach ELLs (Educational

Testing, 2010). The teachers are required to have knowledge of the two languages, but

are not required to receive training on how to teach them. This makes it even more

important for teachers to find creative ways to make the information they are teaching

stay with the student.

Conclusion

English Language Learners struggle in school for many different reasons: their

social adjustment, the grammatical differences in the languages, and the phonological

differences. Because of the struggle which ELLs are going through, it is important for

schools to assess students when they come into a school, and to determine their abilities

and where they are struggling. Based on this assessment, the students can be placed in the

most helpful environment for their education. In order for students to be placed in a

helpful environment, well-organized school systems need to be in a place which

combines the student's native language and the goal language effectively. In these

schools teachers should plan a curriculum which includes different types of learning to

develop students' abilities. If schools are able to carry out these procedures, ELLs will

learn the target language and help other students learn at the same time.

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